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Coparental conflict, competition, and cooperation and parents' perceptions of their children's social-emotional well-being following marital separation

Belinda Belinda Trotter
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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Belinda Belinda Trotter entitled "Coparental conflict, competition, and cooperation and parents' perceptions of their children's social-emotional well-being following marital separation." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Human Ecology.

Cheryl Buehler, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Belinda Bratcher Trotter entitled "Coparental Conflict, Competition, and Cooperation and Parents' Perceptions of Their Children's Social-Emotional Well-Being Following Marital Separation." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Human Ecology.

Cheryl Buehler, Major Professor

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COPARENTAL CONFLICT, COMPETITION, AND COOPERATION AND PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING FOLLOWING MARITAL SEPARATION

A Dissertation

Presented for the

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Degree

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Belinda Bratcher Trotter

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DEDICATION

I wish to pay tribute to a special few of the many friends and family who have loved, labored, and sacrificed in the background so that I could attain my goal. This dissertation is dedicated to

-- my husband Neal who has accepted me as I am, encouraged me to become all that I can, believed that I could and not let me stop until I did, and actively supported my studies with his generous heart, willing hands, and open wallet;

-- my mother-in-law Dorothy who has provided the unconditional love, wisdom, and untold hours of devoted service to help keep our house running and family together during my graduate career;

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ABSTRACT

The first purpose of this study was to test a conceptual model that postulated that coparental conflict (disagreements between divorcing spouses over child-rearing issues), competition (triangulation of their children in coparental conflicts), and cooperation (supportive behaviors) are three interrelated but distinct dimensions of the quality of the former spouse relationship (QFSR). The second purpose was to examine the relative, unique direct effects of the three coparental variables on parents' perceptions of their children's social-emotional well-being (CSEWB) following marital separation. It was hypothesized that CSEWB is affected negatively by coparental competition and, to a lesser degree, positively by coparental cooperation, but is unrelated to coparental conflict.

Data were collected a median of 6 months following separation using self-administered questionnaires completed by 193 parents identified through court records. Children's aggression, dependency, anxiety/depression, and productivity were measured with a revised version of the Personal Adjustment and Role Skills scale (Ellsworth, 1979; Pett, 1982). The coparental variables were measured with scales developed from the work of Ahrons (1981) and Kurdek (1987).

The dimensionality of the QFSR and the interrelatedness of its dimensions were examined using factor and chi-square analyses and zero-order correlations. The effects of the coparental variables on CSEWB were examined using multivariate and stepwise multiple regression analyses. The length of separation, the child's sex and age, and the respondent's sex, education, and income were included as

control variables. Separate analyses were conducted for residential parents (RP) (n = 125) and nonresidential parents (NRP) (n = 68).

The hypothesized dimensionality of the QFSR was supported. Also, as expected, coparental competition and cooperation were related negatively for both subsamples, and coparental conflict and competition were related positively for NRP. Coparental conflict, however, was not related negatively to cooperation for either group of parents.

The QFSR was not related to CSEWB for the RP. However, for NRP, coparental competition was related positively to children's aggression, dependency, and anxiety/depression; and coparental cooperation was related positively to children's productivity. The sole effect of coparental conflict was a negative relationship with children's anxiety/depression.

Interpretation of the different results found for RP and NRP focused on the greater saliency of the QFSR for NRP because of its potential effects on NRP's involvement with and access to their children. The unexpected beneficial effects of coparental conflict for children's anxiety/depression, which emerged only when the effects of competition were held constant, were explained by focusing on the possibility that continuing interactions between coparents, even if in the form of disagreements, reassure the child that both parents are still available. Important conclusions drawn from this study were that (a) family conflict theory provides an effacious framework for conceptualizing the QFSR, and (b) coparental conflict, competition, and cooperation should be conceptualized and measured separately in research and treated differently in intervention.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABBREVIATION	DEFINITION
AE	antisocial-externalized (dimensions of children's social-emotional well-being)
AI	antisocial-internalized (dimensions of children's social-social-emotional well-being)
CSEWB	children's social-emotional well-being
CWB	children's well-being
GPA	grade-point average
FSR	former spouse relationship(s)
NRP	nonresidential parent(s)
ODP	Orientation for Divorcing Parents
PE	prosocial-externalized (dimensions of children's social-emotional well-being)
PI	prosocial-internalized (dimensions of children's social-emotional well-being)
QFSR	quality of the former spouse relationship(s)
RP	residential parent(s)
SES	socioeconomic status

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM, BACKGROUND, AND THEORY

The growing prevalence of divorce has changed the demographic profile of the American family significantly over the past 20 years. Over one million children are involved in divorce proceedings each year, and it is estimated that 45% of the children born in the 1980's will experience the long-term separation or divorce of their parents before age 18 (Norton & Glick, 1986). Because our society views the traditional, intact nuclear family as the "conceptual archetype" for optimal child socialization (Spanier, 1989), these trends have heightened public and professional apprehension and have prompted a proliferation of research on the impact of divorce on children.

The prevailing body of scholarly literature presents divorce as a painful process that places children in a position of vulnerability. Divorce typically involves a series of stressful changes, disruption of close relationships, and an extended period of family disorganization that create several coping tasks for children (Wallerstein, 1983). These tasks must be mastered in addition to the normal and customary tasks of growing up. This added burden introduces increased risk to children's well-being (CWB). The convergence of evidence supports the conclusion that children of divorce, as a group, experience more social, emotional, cognitive, academic, and physical health problems than children from intact homes (Demo & Acock, 1988; Emery, Hetherington, & DiLalla, 1984; Furstenberg & Seltzer, 1986; Guidubaldi

& Cleminshaw, 1985; Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985; Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982; Shinn, 1978; Zill, 1983).

Although children of divorce are at risk developmentally, the short-term reactions to divorce are highly variable, long-term negative consequences are not inevitable, and positive outcomes are possible (Hetherington et al., 1982; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). These findings present a serious challenge to the belief in an indisputable, uniform, and direct link between family structure and CWB (Demo & Acock, 1988; Edwards, 1987; Furstenberg & Seltzer, 1986). In response to this challenge, scholars gradually have changed their underlying research question from "Is divorce harmful to children?" to "How and under what conditions does divorce alter CWB?" (Furstenberg & Seltzer, 1986). The focus has shifted from a single variable assumed to be the causal factor (i.e., family structure) to clusters of individual, familial, and environmental factors that mediate the effects of marital disruption on CWB (see Clingempeel & Reppucci, 1982; Kurdek, 1981, 1987; Peterson, Leigh, & Day, 1984; Stolberg & Bush, 1985). Factors that consistently explain variance in CWB following separation include the quality of the relationship between the former spouses, the nature and quality of the relationship between the child and each parent, the parents' psychosocial well-being, the amount of environmental change experienced by the child, the level of social support available for the child, the child's sex and age, the length of time since separation, and the family's socioeconomic status. (References for studies examining the relationships between these factors and CWB are provided in Appendix A.)

Although detrimental changes in many of these factors are typical during divorce, they are not uniformly experienced by children. By focusing on variations in patterns following separation, the divorced family can be viewed from a perspective that recognizes both its vulnerability and its potential for adjustment, stability, and strength (Blechman, 1982; Buehler, Hogan, Robinson, & Levy, 1985/86; Peterson & Cleminshaw, 1980).

Statement of the Problem

The focus of this investigation was limited to the quality of the former spouse relationship (QFSR) and its impact on children's social-emotional well-being (CSEWB). More specifically, only divorcing families with children were included in the sample, and parents' perceptions of the QFSR and CSEWB were examined a median of 6 months following separation. There were two objectives for this study:

1. To test a conceptual model which postulates that coparental conflict, competition, and cooperation are three interrelated but separate dimensions of the QFSR; and

2. To examine the relationships among these three dimensions of the QFSR (independent variables) and four dimensions of CSEWB including dependency, aggression, anxiety/depression, and productivity (dependent variables).

Rationale

In 1978, the most frequently expressed concern of one sample of divorced parents was a lack of information about how former spouses

work out an effective coparental relationship while terminating their marriage (Goldsmith, 1980). A dearth of research in the area has left parents with few standards to guide the development of their coparenting relationship and has left professionals with inadequate knowledge to help parents effectively with their task (Ahrons, 1979; Goldsmith, 1980). Since 1978, scholars have produced a modest body of descriptive literature and several studies investigating the link between the QFSR and CWB. Although the available knowledge provides some helpful information and supports the importance of the QFSR for children's divorce adjustment, there are many inconsistencies in the literature.

These inconsistencies can be explained, in part, by inadequate conceptualization and measurement of the QFSR (Emery, 1982). An issue of particular concern has been the lack of distinction between conflict (i.e., disagreements) and conflict behaviors (i.e., how coparents address these disagreements). The conceptual definition of "conflict" has been ambiguous, and as a result, "conflict," "discord," "hostility," "acrimony," and "competition" have been treated as synonyms in the literature. Nebulously defined, conflict typically has been viewed as one extreme of a bipolar continuum with "consensus," "harmony," "support," "civility," or "cooperation" as its opposite.

This overly simplistic conceptualization of the QFSR can be attributed in part to the lack of a unifying theoretical framework that makes important distinctions between conflict and conflict-related behaviors. Most research has been atheoretical or based solely on family systems theory (Ponzetti & Cate, 1988). To the author's

knowledge, no other study has clearly conceptualized dimensions of the QFSR using family conflict theory, empirically tested whether the dimensions are conceptually distinct, and examined the differential effects of the dimensions on CSEWB. A synthesis of family systems and conflict theories provides the necessary conceptual tools to view divorce as a process of dramatic family reorganization and to address the differential effects of the dimensions of the QFSR on the process.

Conceptual Framework

The preminent challenge facing the divorcing family is to accommodate the desire of one or both spouses to terminate the marriage while continuing to fulfill its basic functions, especially the nurturance and socialization of children. This requires the family to undergo a complex process of adaptation. During this process, spouses make the transition from married to divorced, and the family makes the transition from nuclearity to binuclearity (Ahrons, 1980a, 1980c). In its binuclear form, the family is composed of two households (maternal and paternal) interdependently joined by continuing coparental rights and responsibilities. Although the marriage is dissolved, family relationships are not automatically terminated (Ahrons, 1980a, 1980c; Buehler, 1983). Rather, the family must redefine its relationships, rules, roles, and allocation of resources so as to fit its new binuclear form (Buehler, 1983; Pais & White, 1979).

Three underlying assumptions of family conflict theory (see Farrington & Foss, 1977; Sprey, 1979) implicate the normal, inevitable, and ubiquitous role of conflict during this change process. First,

family members are assumed to be interdependent and to experience some measure of incongruency in their perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, values, expectations, needs, opinions, and goals. Second, conflict theorists assume that people have a propensity to be self-oriented; are inclined to pursue their own interests at the expense of others; and possess unlimited potential to desire power, prestige, and privilege and to hope that circumstances eventually will conform to their personal agenda. And third, families are assumed to be characterized by structural inequalities in their members' access to scarce resources and power. These three conditions combine to create tremendous potential for intense and extended battles over numerous issues of daily living. Disagreements over scarce resources, controversial means, incompatible goals, family rules, status privileges, the legitimacy of norms, or combinations of these is conflict (Sprey, 1979).

Conflict between divorcing parents is central to the adaptation process because parents provide the leadership for family reorganization. The crucial task facing divorcing parents in their role as the executive dyad of the family is to redefine their relationship so that they reach closure on the marriage and establish a viable coparental relationship (Ahrons, 1980c). However, the coparental domain is one of the most difficult areas of redefinition to negotiate (Bohannan, 1971; Pais & White, 1979). Several factors contribute to this difficulty.

First, marital conflicts typically spill over into and contaminate the coparental relationship (Ahrons, 1980c). Although the spousal and parental relationships commonly are enmeshed in the nuclear family

(Minuchin, 1974), stable marriages usually are not characterized by the degree of disappointment, negative affect, mistrust, ambivalence, and discord over the fate of the marriage found in relationships between divorcing spouses (Ahrons, 1980a, 1980c; Ponzetti & Cate, 1986; Spanier & Thompson, 1984; Weiss, 1975). Also, the decision to divorce indicates that spouses are linked historically by repeated failures to resolve conflict over salient marital issues. These past failures increase the likelihood of future failures (Deutsch, 1973).

Second, the issues involved in negotiating a divorce settlement and, therefore, the coparental relationship (e.g., division of marital property, spousal maintenance, child support, custody, and visitation) are highly interdependent and typically are perceived as central by both parents (Bohannan, 1971; Coogler, 1978; Weiss, 1975). When interdependent issues are central to both and there is a lack of identified alternative solutions, parents often become rigid and cling stubbornly to their own positions. A perception of "winner takes all, loser gets nothing" (Deutsch, 1973, p. 372) often precipitates a bitter and desperate contest. This contest typically is intensified once contact is made with the legal system and its predominantly adversarial approach to divorce (Hetherington & Camara, 1984; Spanier & Thompson, 1984).

Finally, divorce alters the power structure of the spousal relationship because the wife and husband positions are terminated and the legitimate authority vested to these positions is challenged. As a result, the number of issues that must be settled through negotiation increases, conflicts often become contests to maximize personal

resources, and conflict management becomes more dependent upon the interpersonal skills of the former spouses (Scanzoni, 1979; Sprey, 1979). This is particularly problematic because research has indicated that divorced couples have fewer conflict management skills than married ones (Scanzoni, 1968).

In addition to these inherent conditions, there are several conflict-escalating factors that vary among divorces. These include a skewed division of perceived responsibility for the failed marriage; nonmutuality in the decision to divorce; psychological instability or pathology of one or both former spouses; and the presence of third parties (e.g., attorneys or lovers), interested audiences (e.g., extended family members), and role models that encourage destructive conflict behaviors (Kressel, Jaffe, Tuckman, Watson, & Deutsch, 1980; Ponzetti & Cate, 1988; Spanier & Thompson, 1984; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

Given these conditions, effective management of conflict becomes a monumental challenge for divorcing parents. During their struggle, coparents face a paradox: "to share [their] fate in order better to survive and, simultaneously, to compete with [one another] for individual autonomy, authority, and privilege" (Sprey, 1979, p. 156). The central question becomes one of how coparents can continue to function effectively as an alliance of common purpose in the presence of repeated, if not perpetual, conflict over discordant individual interests (Sprey, 1969).

The key to answering this question is that although conflict theorists assume that humans tend to be self-centered, they are <u>not</u>

assumed to be purely hedonistic or exploitive (Sprey, 1979). Rather, they are viewed as having the capacity to collaborate and cooperate within the context of their "contradictory yet interrelated needs and designs" (Horowitz, 1967, p. 268).

Cooperation allows divorcing spouses to manage conflicts so that they have a "non-zero-sum" structure (Sprey, 1979). That is, gains for one parent do not necessarily mean losses for the other. This win-win/lose-lose perception allows for an "us-versus-the-problem" orientation to conflicts and to problem-solving behaviors based on fairness, justice, respect, and reciprocity. Typical conflict-related strategies include rational discussion, reasoning, mutual support, and response to requests for help. Thus, the coparental relationship becomes an alliance that bonds former spouses as partners in the joint venture of rearing their children. In sum, cooperation implies that parents share a perspective that recognizes the priority of their children's well-being (i.e., the collective aim) over their own individual interests (or at least the equality of the two) (Sprey, 1979).

In order to achieve this perspective, however, former spouses must first be able to compartmentalize their feelings, beliefs, conflicts, and interactions regarding the marriage and its termination within the boundaries of the spousal relationship (Ahrons, 1980a, 1980c). This containment allows the coparental relationship the degree of autonomy, cohesion, and freedom from "contamination" needed to become an effective, child-centered unit. Thus, parents can redefine their relationship based on a mutual appreciation for the right and responsibility of each to maintain attachment bonds and involvement with the

children. When the rules for how each parent will continue to relate to the children are clarified, children more easily can redefine and stabilize their relationship with each parent (Ahrons, 1980c).

Divorcing parents face the sizeable challenge of structuring modes of cooperation without adequate normative standards and role models (Ahrons, 1980a, 1980c; Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Goetting, 1979; Goldsmith, 1980; Spanier & Thompson, 1984). In the absence of these, many couples adopt stereotypic views of the divorcing family as their guide. Ahrons (1980a, 1980c; Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987) described this stereotype and the impact of its adoption on the family. Traditional cultural expectations view former spouses as incapable of compartmentalizing their anger and developing a child-centered relationship. As a result, one parent--typically the father--is squeezed out of the system, creating a single-parent family. This strategy is appropriate only when the nonresidential parent remains absent and no longer performs parenting functions. "Closing ranks" when the parent desires to maintain an active parenting role is dysfunctional (Boss, 1977; Hill, 1969). Typically, the nonresidential parent becomes depressed (Gersick, 1979; Grief, 1979), the residential parent becomes overburdened (Brandwein, Brown, & Fox, 1974; Hetherington et al., 1982), and the children become distressed (Hetherington et al., 1982; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). If the nonresidential parent resists these efforts to "close ranks," a prolonged or endless period of competition and embittered chaos may ensue.

As defined by conflict theorists, competition is a state of negative interdependence between coparents such that gains for one mean

losses for others (Sprey, 1979). With this "zero-sum" structure, conflicts are perceived as ending in either personal victory or defeat. The goal becomes destruction of the other parent or, at least, of his/her power. Because the usual norms of conduct and morality are exempted under the motto "all is fair in war," the parents typically use denigration, deception, threats, coercion, espionage, aggression, and/or violence as conflict tactics. In this scenario, outcomes include the expansion and escalation of conflict, an increase in the number of issues and participants in the conflict, and deterioration of family relationships.

Several scholars have contributed to the delineation of cooperative and competitive conflict processes discussed here and summarized in Table 1 (Bach & Wyden, 1968; Bateson, 1972; Deutsch, 1973; Epstein & Santa Barbara, 1975; Filley, 1975; Santa Barbara & Epstein, 1974; Scanzoni, 1979; Sprey, 1979). Although the behavior of some former spouses fit neatly into these two extremes, most fall into intermediate categories that reflect a ratio of competitive and cooperative behaviors. Ahrons, the leading pioneer in the area of former spouse relationships, has developed a typology of coparenting styles that includes "dissolved duos," "fiery foes," "angry associates," "cooperative colleagues," and "best friends" (1979, 1980b, 1980c, 1981, 1983; Ahrons and Rodgers, 1987). Although Ahrons has used family systems and stress theories to the exclusion of conflict theory to conceptualize her work, an underlying presence of the concepts and principles of the competition-versus-cooperation paradigm is evident.

Table 1. Characteristics of Conflict Processes

	Competition	Cooperation
Perception of other	Enemy Untrustworthy Illegitimate interests Sensitivity to differences Misperceptions and bias (e.g., evil, incompetent)	Ally Trustworthy Legitimate interests Sensitivity to similarities Realistic appraisal and identification with other
Feelings toward other	Negative (anger, resentment, hostility, bitterness, hatred)	Respect
Perception of encounter	Zero-sum Win-lose	Non-zero-sum Win-win/lose-lose
Orientation to conflict	I-versus-you Self-oriented Own point-of-view Personalized	Us-versus-the-problem Relationship-oriented Mutual needs point-of-view Depersonalized
Perception of outcomes	Personal victory or defeat	Joint victory or defeat
Conflict goals	Personal victory Defeat the enemy Render enemy powerless and increase own power and resources	Joint victory Defeat the problem Enhance mutual power and resources of alliance
Focus	Past Short-term Solution	Present and future Long-term Goals, values, and motives behind solution
Negotiation position	Rigid Demands	Flexible Requests
Standards for behavior	"All is fair in war" Usual norms of conduct and morality exempted Exploitation	Fairness and justice Clear, consistent, and unbiased set of shared procedural rules Reciprocity and mutuality

Table 1. (Cont.)

	Competition	Cooperation
Conflict behaviors	Bargaining	Problem-solving
	Threats and promises	Persuasion
	Quarrels and verbal abuse	Reasoning and calm discussion
	Aggression and violence	Assertion
	Degrade and denigrate enemy	Support ally
	Refuse requests for help	Honor requests for help
	Capitalize on enemy's needs and weaknesses	Utilize special talents of both allies
	Disorderly, chaotic sequence	Orderly, planned sequence
	Undifferentiated from other processes	Differentiated from other processes
Communication	Impoverished	Rich
	Misleading and unreliable	Open and honest
	Irrelevant information	Relevant information
	Cleverness, deception, and espionage	Direct and straight-forward gathering of information
Power	Based on position and resources	Based on talent, skills, and expertise
	Coercion	Voluntary compliance
	Used to promote self interests	Used to promote alliance's goals
	Used outside knowledge and will of enemy	Used with knowledge and consent of ally
Outcomes/consequences	Conflict expands and escalates	Conflict limited and encapsulated
	Increased number of issues, motives, and parties	Controlled number of issues, motives, and parties
	Process becomes independent of initial causes	Process remains focused on initial causes
	Solutions imposed, refused, or open to repeated negotiations	Solutions mutually acceptable, avoid duplication of effort
	Divisive	Integrative
	Injustice	Justice, fairness, equity
	Destructive to well-being	Constructive to well-being
	Deterioration of system	Improvement of system

In sum, from a conflict theory perspective, conflict is required to precipitate the necessary restructuring of the divorcing family, but it should be equated with neither disorganization nor instability. Conflict is viewed as a neutral phenomenon--inherently neither good nor bad. Although conflicts can and do disrupt, dismember, or destroy binuclear families, they also create opportunity for adaptation and growth (The Significance of Human Conflict, author unknown). The critical factor is not the presence of harmony, but rather the ability to face conflict rationally and manage it constructively so that conflict can lead to purposive reorganization. Conflict-induced crises and dysfunction can be forestalled when coparents are able to structure modes of cooperation and to avoid competition (Sprey, 1979). Although difficult and painful, the successful negotiation of change enables the family to emerge from the divorce transition as a stable and well-functioning binuclear unit. Therefore, according to conflict theory, it should be the nature and quality of coparents' conflict behavior that effects CSEWB and not the level of conflict itself.

Nominal Definitions

The Quality of the Former Spouse Relationship (Independent Variables)

The former spouse relationship (FSR) is an umbrella term used to indicate the continued connection between persons who are divorced. The scope and interdependency of this connection is determined largely by the absence or presence of children. In cases where the former

spouses also are parents, their relationship consists of two components: coparental and nonparental. The coparental includes those aspects of the FSR based on mutual child-rearing and parenting functions, and the nonparental includes aspects based on any other functions (Ahrons, 1981; Goldsmith, 1980). This study examined aspects of the coparental relationship only.

The coparental relationship is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct with dimensions divided into two categories: structure and quality. The established structure of the relationship reflects the specific ground rules for child-related interaction, roles, resources, rights, and responsibilities. Its dimensions include the frequency, channels, and content of communication between coparents; the relative involvement of each in child-rearing activities, routines, and chores; and the relative authority, involvement, and power of each in child-related decision-making.

Whereas the structure reflects how divorcing spouses divide and share rights and responsibilities, the quality reflects "how they get along" (QFSR). This study examined three dimensions of the QFSR: coparental conflict, competition, and cooperation.

Coparental conflict is disagreement or argument between former spouses over child-related matters. The conflict process is entered when parents choose to confront one another (rather than avoid confrontation) over their differences.

Coparental competition is a set of oppositional and hostile behaviors that further one's own goals at the expense of the other parent's. These behaviors can be either direct and overt (i.e., verbal

aggression and physical violence) or indirect and covert. Triangulation of the children in parental conflict is the primary dynamic of indirect tactics which include denigration of the former spouse, undermining the children's affections for the other parent, and using the children as conflict tools (i.e., spies, allies, and/or hostages).

Coparental cooperation is a set of behaviors that facilitate a continued relationship between one's former spouse and the children. These behaviors include encouraging involvement between the children and the other parent, providing emotional support for the other's parenting endeavors, and acting as a resource for one's coparent by responding to requests for help and flexibility.

Children's Social-Emotional Well-Being (Dependent Variables)

Children's well-being is a construct that embraces the ideal that children be happy, healthy, prosperous, growing, sociable, and proficient individuals. It implies that they possess the requisite abilities, qualities, and means for meeting the necessities of life and for engaging in social relationships and productive activities. It is a broad, multidimensional construct that usually is broken down into several general areas of functioning. These areas include social, emotional, cognitive, intellectual, academic, and physical well-being. The scope of this study was limited to investigating the impact of the QFSR on children's social-emotional well-being.

Children's social-emotional well-being (CSEWB) is defined as the ability of children to engage successfully and appropriately in

interpersonal relationships and in work or play activities with relative freedom from noxious social behaviors and burdensome emotions. It is a multidimensional construct that typically is assessed through the concurrent measurement of several variables. This study examined parents' perceptions of four specific dimensions.

Dependency is an antisocial, externalized concept that reflects a reluctance to proceed with appropriate measures of autonomy and self-direction. Children with high levels of dependency will rely extensively on others for support, assistance, encouragement, leadership, and control.

Aggression is an antisocial, externalized concept that involves egocentric, emotionally demanding, beligerent, and destructive behaviors directed toward property or persons (Jacobson, 1978a). Children with high levels of aggression engage in acts of overt antagonism, defiance, hostility, and unfriendliness.

Anxiety/depression is an antisocial, internalized concept. It is a socio-emotional disability characterized by behaviors manifesting fear, worried concern, and apprehension over impending ills. Children with high levels of anxiety/depression are marked by sadness, dejection, self-deprecation, and extreme uneasiness (Jacobson, 1978a).

Productivity is a prosocial, externalized concept reflecting task directedness. Children with high levels of productivity show sufficient attention span, task persistence, and completion conscientiousness to get results without giving in to frustrations and distractions.

Overview

In this chapter, the problem addressed by the current investigation has been presented along with the background from which it was developed and the conceptual framework upon which it was based. In Chapter 2, the research related to the problem is reviewed in three parts. In Part 1, the effects of divorce on various dimensions of CSEWB and problematic research issues within the area are discussed. In Part 2, the literature that describes the QFSR is reviewed. In Part 3, the impact of the QFSR on CSEWB is examined.

In Chapter 3, the sampling, data collection procedures, theoretical model, hypotheses, and measures are presented. The data analysis methods and results are presented and discussed in Chapter 4. The final chapter presents a summary and interpretation of the findings and the implications and conclusions formulated from the study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Children's Social-Emotional Well-Being Following Separation (CSEWB)

Several scholars have provided comprehensive reviews and/or critiques of the research addressing the impact of divorce on children (Atkeson, Forehand, & Rickard, 1982; Blechman, 1982; Cashion, 1984; Demo & Acock, 1988; Edwards, 1987; Emery, 1982; Emery et al., 1984; Hetherington & Camara, 1984; Kanoy & Cunningham, 1984; Kurdek, 1987, Levitin, 1979; Lowery & Settle, 1985). The purpose of this discussion is to summarize the major conclusions and methodological limitations that they have identified so that the current investigation is placed within the context of a broad field of study.

CSEWB is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon; and collectively, researchers have used many measures of numerous dimensions. Review of the literature is facilitated by grouping the various dimensions into categories. Empirical evidence has indicated that externalized and internalized behavior problems (Achenbach, 1985; Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983) and prosocial and antisocial divorce outcomes (Stolberg, Camplair, Currier, & Wells, 1987) are discreet broad-band dimensions of CSEWB. These two bipolar characteristics were used to create four categories for the following discussion. Antisocial-externalized (AE) dimensions are symptoms of psychological distress and/or disturbed socialization turned outward in the form of undercontrolled socially

undesireable or deviant behaviors. The antisocial-internalized (AI) category includes burdensome emotions and symptoms of stress turned inward in the form of overcontrolled behavior and neurotic problems. The prosocial-externalized (PE) category includes behavioral aspects of social competence, and the prosocial-internalized (PI) includes psychological and cognitive traits that contribute to social competence. There has been far more research on antisocial dimensions than prosocial and, within the antisocial categories, more on externalized symptoms than internalized (Demo & Acock, 1988; Emery, 1982; Emery et al., 1984).

Effects of Divorce on Children

Children of divorce are overrepresented in the outpatient mental health treatment population by a factor between two and four and are referred most often for AE behavior problems (Emery et al., 1984; Kalter, 1977; Zill, 1983). An increase in children's noncompliance, aggression, and irritability following separation has been described vividly in the literature (Hetherington et al., 1982; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Weiss, 1975). Also, comparisons of nonclinical samples of children from divorced and intact homes have found higher levels for the divorce group on delinquency, predelinquent conduct disorders, sexual precocity, verbal or physical aggression, noncompliance, dependency, hyperactivity, impulsivity, and distractibility. (See Appendix B for the references to studies that have compared intact and divorced groups on specific dimensions of CSEWB.) These differences are still evident when large national samples and controls for social class have

been used (Demo & Acock, 1988). Similar comparisons for PE dimensions have indicated that children of divorce also exhibit deficits in social skills, peer relations, and productivity (see Appendix B for references).

Because of relatively infrequent treatment referrals and equivocal empirical research for AI divorce-related problems, some scholars have concluded that children are unlikely to respond to divorce with over-controlled behavior (Emery et al., 1984). However, several clinicians have reported observing AI symptoms in their divorce treatment populations (Anthony, 1974; Derdeyn, 1977; Gardner, 1974, 1976; McDermott, 1968, 1970; Morrison, 1974; Rosenthal, 1979; Sugar, 1970; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Westman, 1972). McDermott (1970) found that although moderate to severe depression was involved in 34% of his divorce cases, parents rarely mentioned depressive symptoms during intake interviews. Also, some scholars who have used nonclinical samples have reported higher levels for children of divorce than children from intact homes on anxiety, sadness, insecurity, and withdrawal (see Appendix B for references). Additionally, youth have self-reported higher levels of withdrawal than that reported by their parents (Pett, 1982). Therefore, it is not clear whether AI symptoms are less common than AE or merely more difficult to detect and/or less noxious for adults. It appears that AE symptoms and PE deficits are more prevalent, but that AI problems are underestimated.

Scholars historically have viewed maladjustment as the only likely outcome of divorce for children (Demo & Acock, 1988). However, only about 14% of the children of divorce are perceived by parents as

needing professional help, whereas the remaining 86% appear to cope without intervention (Emery et al., 1984; Zill, 1983). Recently scholars have recognized the possibility of enhanced CSEWB following divorce and have begun assessing both negative and positive dimensions (Stolberg & Bush, 1985). It appears that some children concurrently display both anti- and prosocial responses, indicating that the effects of divorce can be mixed (Emery, 1982; Stolberg & Anker, 1983; Stolberg et al., 1987; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

When enhanced functioning has been found, it typically has been in the PI dimensions. Compared to children from intact families, children of divorce have had higher internal locus of control and ego-identity achievement scores (see Appendix B for references). The findings on self-concept have been mixed. Parish and colleagues have reported lower levels for children of divorce, but several other scholars have reported no differences between divorced and intact groups (see Appendix B for references). Scholars also have reported greater maturity, independence, and reponsibility in youth following divorce as they accept some of the tasks typically performed by married parents (Demo & Acock, 1988; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Weiss, 1975). Also, the less rigid gender-role orientation of children from divorced homes has been labeled "androgeny" by some scholars and has been viewed as a strength rather than maladjustment (Demo & Acock, 1988; Kurdek & Siesky, 1980; Weiss, 1975).

Although children of divorce clearly are at risk for social and emotional problems, there is wide variation in their responses. Collectively, the body of literature indicates that the children who

suffer the most and longest appear to be boys (especially those in mother-custody homes), young at the time of separation, recently separated, and those who experience continuing interparental hostility, ineffective parenting, psychologically burdened or disturbed parents, loss of their relationship with the nonresidential parent, high levels of disruption in their predivorce environments and routines, an impoverished social support network, and/or serious setbacks in their family's economic situation. (See Appendix A for a list of studies that have examined the effects of these factors on children's divorce adjustment and a justification for why several of these factors should be included as control variables in studies of the impact of divorce on CWB.)

Research Issues

The body of literature on the effects of divorce on CSEWB is voluminous, but replete with contradictions and inconsistencies. Scholars have identified several common methodological shortcomings that have made it difficult to draw definitive conclusions and have retarded the growth of a sound, coherent knowledge base.

The first limitation involves the measurement of CSEWB. Conceptualization typically has been either too global or too content-restricted, and the measures often have been highly subjective with limited evidence of adequate reliability and validity (Atkeson et al., 1982; Emery et al., 1984; Kanoy & Cunningham, 1984; Kurdek, 1987). Scholars have stressed the importance of conceptualizing and operationalizing CSEWB as a multidimensional construct with both antisocial

and prosocial and both externalized and internalized dimensions (Buehler, 1988; Demo & Acock, 1988; Walsh & Stolberg, 1988/89). The wider use of standardized multidimensional measures would foster the replication and integration of findings.

A second concern in the research on CSEWB post-divorce has been the source of information. How children are adjusting to divorce apparently depends on who is asked. Scholars have noted discrepancies between the perceptions of CSEWB held by parents, children, teachers, and/or clinicians (Fulton, 1979; Hammond, 1979; Kurdek, 1987; Kurdek & Berg, 1983; Kurdek, Blisk, & Siesky, 1981; Santrock, 1972; Shybunko, 1988/89; Tschann, Johnston, Kline, & Wallerstein, 1989; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Webster-Stratton, 1989). However, scholars have suggested that the low correlation between scores derived from different sources is not necessarily a sign of measurement bias, but may be an indication of the situational nature of children's divorce adjustment (Achenbach, 1985; Ellsworth, 1979; Kurdek, 1987). From this perspective, the scores from different sources should not correlate highly because raters interact with the child under different circumstances and within different relationships. However, some of the differences between raters' scores might be explained by predisposed biases. For example, nondivorced parents and clinicians believe that divorce has more negative effects on children than divorced parents (Plunkett, Riemer, Kalter, & Alpern, 1985). Also, teachers stereotypically rate children of divorce as less well-adjusted than children from intact homes (Guttmann & Brondo, 1988/89; Santrock & Tracy, 1978). In addition, children may minimize their symptoms in order to maintain a

sense of mastery and control during the divorce process (Kurdek, 1987). Although differences may exist among informants for these reasons, Pett (1982) found that adolescents' self-ratings and their parents' ratings on the Personal Adjustment and Roles Skills (PARSII) inventory were statistically different on only two (i.e., aggression and withdrawal) of the six dimensions of CSEWB measured. But regardless of whether interrater consistency has been demonstrated or of explanations for discrepant ratings, scholars have recommended using multiple sources for the measurement of CSEWB (Kurdek, 1987; Emery, 1982). Additionally, Kurdek has suggested a second-person design for assessing children's behavior and self-report for intrapersonal cognition and affect.

A third shortcoming of the extant research has been an overreliance on unrepresentative and small samples that has limited generalizability. Clinical samples tap only those children with the most severe or persistent problems and reveal little about the typical experience of non-referred children (Demo & Acock, 1988; Isaacs, Leon, & Donohue, 1986), and convenience samples typically are small, self-selected, and biased toward white, middle-class, mother-custody families (Atkeson et al., 1982; Kurdek, 1987; Levitin, 1979; White & Mika, 1983). However, national surveys, although they use larger and more representative samples, typically have stressed demographic and sociological factors and have ignored or poorly operationalized the social-psychological variables so important to divorce research (Demo & Acock, 1988). Although accurate representative and random sampling in the area of divorce is problematic and difficult to attain, scholars

have pointed to the efficacy of drawing samples from court records to reduce the limitations encountered in convenience sampling (Kitson & Raschke, 1981; White & Mika, 1983).

The fourth specific shortcoming in the divorce literature has been the predominant use of cross-sectional research designs that do not allow for examinination of time- and process-related changes in divorce adjustment. Prospective cohort investigations with longitudinal designs are needed to provide information on the course of children's responses to divorce; to distinguish between separation, life-change, and conflict responses; and to differentiate short-term responses from long-term consequences of divorce (Emery, 1982; Kitson & Raschke, 1981; Price-Bonham & Balswick, 1980; White & Mika, 1983).

A fifth common limitation is the use of weak statistical tests such as zero-order correlations and simple linear regression. Critics call for more sophisticated statistical techniques (such as multiple regression analysis and multivariate analysis of variance) that can examine the simultaneous, independent, and relative causal impact of a number of variables while controlling for important extraneous variables (Blechman, 1982; Kitson & Raschke, 1981). Finally, the inadequate use of control variables including the child's age and sex, the family's socioeconomic status (SES), and the length of time since separation have hampered our knowledge.

Summary

In sum, children of divorce are at risk for social-emotional problems, but long-term deleterious effects are not inevitable. Children's initial reactions are highly variable, negative effects typically are temporary and of modest intensity, and a mixture of antisocial and prosocial responses is possible. Important individual, familial, and environmental factors explain variance in the type, severity, and persistence of children's reactions to divorce and decrease or eliminate the significance of family type for predicting CSEWB. In view of these findings, scholars have stressed the importance of conceptualizing CSEWB as a multidimensional construct and of focusing research on the effects of mediating factors. They also have identified several methodological shortcomings that have limited the growth of a coherent knowledge base.

Although not all of these common methodological limitations were overcome in the current investigation, the author has sought to make a contribution by examining the effects of an important mediating variable on several dimensions of CSEWB. This study was part of a longitudinal project in which prospective data were collected using a standardized measure of the dependent variables and a relatively large sample drawn from court records. Multiple regression analyses were used to determine the independent effects of three dimensions of the QFSR while controlling for SES, length of time since separation, the child's age and sex, and the responding parent's sex and residential status. The analyses reported here were conducted on data collected

during the initial phase of the project at a median of 6 months post-separation. Therefore, this study examined CSEWB during the period of the divorce transition when children are the most vulnerable. The focus of this review now shifts to the descriptive literature on the QFSR.

Quality of Former Spouse Relationships (QFSR)

The bulk of the available descriptive information on the QFSR has come from semi- and unstructured interviews (Ahrons, 1979, 1980b, 1981, 1983; Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Bloom & Hodges, 1981; Fulton, 1979; Goldsmith, 1980; Hetherington et al., 1982; Kressel et al., 1980; Luepnitz, 1986; Neugebauer, 1988/89; Oppawsky, 1988/89; Spanier & Thompson, 1984; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Weiss, 1975). Other methods have included analysis of court records (Cline & Westman, 1971; Luepnitz, 1986), single-item evaluations (Isaacs & Leon, 1988; Kurdek & Blisk, 1983), multiple-item scales (Ahrons, 1979, 1980b, 1981, 1983; Goldsmith, 1980; Isaacs & Leon, 1988; Ponzetti & Cate, 1986), and children's reports of specific divorce-related events (Sandler, Wolchik, & Braver, in press).

It should be noted that generalizing from descriptive findings requires caution because most of the samples were not very representative. Some samples have been skewed towards high quality relationships because parents with terminated or extremely acrimonious relationships were either absent or underrepresented. For example, samples have overrepresented couples participating in divorce mediation (Kressel et al., 1980) or have been restricted to joint custody

families (Ahrons, 1979, 1980b) or maternal custody families in which both parents agreed to participate, lived close together, and had regular contact with the children (Ahrons, 1981, 1983; Goldsmith, 1980). Conversely, Wallerstein and Kelly's (1980) intervention sample and Fulton's (1979) sample of predominantly contested and custody investigation cases probably were skewed towards lower quality relationships than typical of the general population. Virtually all samples were restricted to Caucasians or severely underrepresented Blacks. The review procedes with these caveats in mind.

Coparental Conflict

High levels of disagreement and conflict appear to be normative during the first year of separation with arguments occurring during the majority of contacts between parents (Bloom & Hodges, 1981; Hetherington et al., 1982; Isaacs, 1988; Kressel et al., 1980; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). The most common areas of conflict seem to be child-rearing values and attitudes, parenting behaviors and responsibilities, finances, child support, visitation arrangements, custody, the children's divorce adjustment, and parents' intimate relations with others (Ahrons, 1979, 1980b; Goldsmith, 1980; Hetherington et al., 1982). Fathers have perceived their lack of input and control in child-rearing matters and mothers have perceived the father's "spoiling" the children and his inadequate concern and financial and emotional support as the issues causing the most conflict (Goldsmith, 1980). Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) found that money was involved in the most intense and prolonged fights. However, Isaacs and Leon (1988) found

that if parents argued over any one issue, they tended to argue over several.

Conflict apparently follows a developmental course during the divorce process. Longitudinal (Hetherington et al., 1982; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980) and retrospective studies (Ponzetti & Cate, 1986; Spanier & Thompson, 1984) have indicated that conflict escalates during initial discussions of the nature and future of the marriage, reaches a peak around the point of separation, and then gradually decreases. However, fairly high levels of conflict are typical well into the post-divorce period. One year following divorce, 75% of Goldsmith's (1980) sample reported at least moderate conflict, about 35% of Ahrons' (1981) perceived their coparental relationship as always conflicted, and 34% of Sandler et al.'s (in press) sample of children reported recently witnessing parental arguments. Even after 5 years of separation, 57% of Kurdek and Blisk's (1983) sample of custodial mothers reported a high frequency of arguments during coparental contacts.

However, frequent conflict is not inevitable, even during early separation. Although a minority of couples exhibited them, settlement negotiation styles marked by low conflict have been identified (Kressel et al., 1980; Isaacs & Leon, 1988). Whereas most parents have reported trying to avoid confrontation over volatile issues with no mutually-acceptable solutions, even the small subset of "perfect pals" (i.e., friendly relationships with low competition and high cooperation) have reported moderate levels of conflict for years after divorce (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Goldsmith, 1980; Spanier & Thompson,

1984). What sets these dyads apart is not the absence of conflict, but their ability to disagree in a civilized manner (Luepnitz, 1986).

Coparental Competition

It appears that few couples achieve this civility during the first few months of separation. At this time, most spouses exhibit open hostility, making exposure to explosive interactions and competition between parents the hallmark of children's early divorce experience (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Hetherington et al., 1982; Oppawsky, 1988/89; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). All but 4 of the 72 coparental relationships in Hetherington's sample and 80% of Wallerstein and Kelly's were marked by intense acrimony, hostility, and bitterness at 2 months post-divorce and 6 months post-separation, respectively. It appears that mothers engage in more competitive behaviors and persist with their hostility longer than fathers (Hetherington et al., 1982, Sandler et al., in press; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Physical violence is far less common than verbal abuse, but a small minority of children witness their parents attack each other with fists or weapons (Johnston, Gonzàles, & Campbell, 1987; Oppawsky, 1988/89; Sandler et al., in press). This violence often is accompanied by substance abuse.

However, children apparently are exposed to more indirect than direct competition (Sandler et al., in press). The most common competitive behavior is character assassination. Wallerstein & Kelly (1980) found that over half of the parents, especially mothers, denigrated their partner in front of the children 6 months after separation. The "badmouthing" of one parent by the other was experienced

recently by 30% of the children interviewed by Sandler et al. (in press) a mean of 16.5 months post-separation.

The triangulation of the children in coparental conflict by co-opting them as spies and allies also is common during the first year of divorce. About 65% of the parents in Wallerstein and Kelly's (1980) sample openly vied for their children's affection and loyalty with 25% of the mothers placing heavy pressure on children to reject the father. Although many children avoided recruitment, 20% were engaged in strong alliances. Mother-child alliances occurred twice as often and endured longer than father-child alliances. In the Sandler et al. study (in press), children reported that their mothers (a) told them not to tell their father something, (b) asked them about the father's private life, and (c) said that they did not like the child spending time with the father in 43%, 33%, and 11% of the cases, respectively. Children reported that fathers engaged in these three behaviors in 39%, 22%, and 4% of the cases, respectively.

Another common competitive behavior is to use children as weapons and hostages in the war against the former spouse, a tactic more available to mothers than fathers because of the overwhelming predominance of maternal custody. About 20% of the mothers in Wallerstein and Kelly's (1980) sample openly sabatoged visits 6 months following separation; and 40% of the mothers and 53% of the fathers in Fulton's (1979) sample reported that the mother withheld visitation privileges at least once for punitive reasons that had nothing to do with CWB. Half of Neugebauer's (1988/89) sample of nonclinical children said that their mother interferred with visitations, and many believed that

distant geographic moves upon separation were intended to rupture the father-child relationship. Many of these children reported that they later learned that their mothers had intercepted father-sent phone calls, letters, and gifts, and that they had erroneously interpreted the lack of contact as their father's indifference towards them.

Although competition appears to be rampant early in the divorce transition, most coparenting relationships become less acrimonious over time (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Hetherington et al., 1982; Jacobson, 1978b; Johnston et al., 1987). By 18 months post-separation, 45% of the fathers and 33% of the mothers in Wallerstein and Kelly's sample had left bitterness and competition behind, and 50% of the children were not aware of any current coparental hostility. However, 50% of the mothers and 20% of the fathers continued to denigrate the former spouse, and a substantial minority of parents continued to rage.

Approximately 20% of coparental dyads exhibit a style that has been labeled "bitter enemies" (Ahrons, 1979, 1980b), "embittered-chaotic" (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980), "fiery foes" (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987), and "enmeshed" (Kressel et al., 1980). Importantly, couples who relate as enemies appear to be strikingly impervious to the passage of time (Spanier & Thompson, 1984), and brief intervention programs appear ineffective at abating the bizaare competition that persists at 6 months, 18 months, and 5 years following separation (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

Coparental Cooperation

Although most former spouses report that they try to cooperate and negotiate divorce settlements and child-care arrangements that are in the best interest of the child (Spanier & Thompson, 1984), there is a dearth of information about the actual level of coparental cooperation. Less than 20% of the custodial mothers in Fulton's sample (1979) reported that they worked jointly with their former spouse to solve child-related problems. However, about 65% of Hetherington et al.'s (1982) sample reported that their former spouse would be the first person they would contact in the case of an emergency, 47% of Ahrons' (1981) perceived their coparental relationship as supportive more often than not, and 13% of Goldsmith's (1980) reported they were able to cooperate "almost all of the time." Wallerstein and Kelly (1980) concluded that by 5 years following separation, 30% of their sample had developed coparental relationships characterized by flexible visitation arrangements and a lack of interference in each other's parenting decisions.

Thus, it appears that although their coparental relationships typically are conflict-ridden, some divorced parents do cooperate and act as primary child-care supports for one another (Clingempeel & Reppucci, 1982). However, parents perceive themselves as more cooperative than their partners (Ahrons, 1979, 1980b; Goldsmith, 1980). Both sexes have reported that they accommodate requests, act as a resource, and provide emotional support more often than their former spouse.

Interviews of coparents with high quality relationships have revealed that their ability to cooperate increased over time and with determined effort (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Ellison, 1983; Goldsmith, 1980; Kressel et al., 1980). Several characteristics that improve and maintain the QFSR have been identified. Cooperative parents (a) feel a bond as parents, (b) share a strong desire for both to continue active parenting, (c) remain child-, present-, goal-, and task-oriented, (d) adhere to norms of equity, (e) set limits on behavior to prevent their anger and differences from interfering with their ability to coparent, (f) develop moderately structured arrangements that permit room for the flexibility needed to meet changing needs, and (g) act as resources and provide support for one another's parenting.

Relationships Among Dimensions

There is very little empirical data on the relationships among coparental conflict, competition, and cooperation. Significant negative correlations between conflict and cooperation (Ahrons, 1979; Isaacs & Leon, 1988) and a positive correlation between conflict and competition (Isaacs & Leon) have been reported. To the author's knowledge, there has been no empirical research on the relationship between cooperation and competition. However, the descriptive literature points to a negative relationship (Kressel et al., 1980; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

Therefore, it appears that (a) conflict tends to increase as competition increases and cooperation decreases, and (b) cooperation tends to increase as competition decreases. The literature also

suggests that the three constructs, although interrelated, are separate dimensions of the QFSR. Reported correlations have been modest, and coparenting styles with patterns contrary to what would be expected from the correlations have been identified (e.g., high conflict and either high cooperation or low competition) (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Kressel et al., 1980).

Summary

High levels of conflict and competition and low levels of cooperation appear to be normative during the early months of separation. By 1 year following divorce, the population is split about equally between predominantly cooperative and predominantly competitive relationships. It appears that about 50% of former spouses develop a coparenting style characterized by moderate levels of all three dimensions; about 25% exhibit high conflict and competition, and low cooperation; and about 25% apparently succeed at building a relationship with low competition, high cooperation, and low to moderate conflict (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Spanier & Thompson, 1984).

Although qualitative data indicate that conflict, competition, and cooperation are separate aspects of the QFSR, this dimensionality has not been tested empirically. In the current study, factor analysis, correlation procedures, and chi-square analyses were used to examine the independence and the interrelatedness of the three dimensions. Although not all problems with representativeness were overcome, the court-drawn sample included both intervention program participants and nonparticipants and was not restricted in ways typical of past

research (e.g., to joint or maternal custodians, participation of both parents, or contested cases). The focus of this review now shifts to research on the impact of the QFSR on CSEWB.

Impact of the QFSR on CSEWB

Although the descriptive literature indicates that the QFSR is multidimensional, organizing a review of the literature on the differential effects of coparental conflict, cooperation, and competition on CSEWB was difficult. Conceptualization, terminology, and measurement typically have been inconsistent, simplistic, and unclear. For the purposes of this discussion, however, the extant literature has been examined using the paradigm developed from conflict theory. The qualitative information and quantitative measures have been analyzed and interpreted using the three concepts as defined earlier in this paper. Each measure has been assigned to a category based on this analysis, and the findings are discussed under the topic deemed appropriate regardless of the terminology used by the original author. Measures were assigned to an "overall QFSR" category if they assessed global quality without addressing specific dimensions or if they used a "scale" that summed scores across items tapping different dimensions. Measures were assigned to conflict, cooperation, or competition only if they were judged to address one specific dimension.

Direct Effects of Overall QFSR

A summary of studies examining the direct effects of "overall QFSR" is presented in Table 2 and shows that findings are quite mixed.

Table 2. Summary of Studies on Direct Effects of Overall Quality of Former Spouse Relationship (QFSR) on Children's Social-Emotional Well-Being

Study	Description of Sample	Point in Divorce Process	Dependent Measures[a]	Independent Measures[b]	Major Findings
Ellison, 1983	10 intact and 10 divorced nonclinical families	Separated 1 to 8 years	Sum across 14 items on peer relations, school performance, and signs of stress; rated by C, M, and F	PHS (sum across 9 items on Ps' communication, agreement on C-rearing, ways of settling conflict, and view of spouse's parental performance; judge-rated based on interviews)	Sig cor (r = .41) between PHS and divorce group C-rated CWB. NS for divorced M or F and 3 intact ratings of CWB.
Furstenberg & Seltzer, 1986	1,423 CN aged 12-16 in 1981 chosen from 1976 representative sample of 2,279 if Ps divorced or at risk in 1976 plus random sample of stable families	More than 5 years post-divorce at Time 2 for most	Single-items on school adjustment, satisfaction with family life, and general adjustment rated by P, C, or T.	Single-item on how well Ps currently get along rated by C and P	No relationship between QFSR and CWB.
Hess & Camara, 1979	32 white CN aged 7-11 (16 boys, 16 girls) from 16 M-custody divorced families recruited from court records and 16 intact from classrooms of divorce CN	Separated 2 to 3 years	P-checklists and T-ratings of peer relations, aggression, work style at school, and stress symptoms	PHS (see Ellison, 1983)	Divorce group had greater stress, poorer work styles, and higher aggression than intact with differences greater for boys than girls. With groups combined, PHS more important for CWB than family type. Sig cor between PHS and stress (r = -.55) and aggression (r = -.38).
Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1979, 1982	48 white, middle-class, nursery-school CN (24 boys, 24 girls) and both Ps from M-custody	2 months, 1 year, and 2 years post-divorce	Home and school observations, P checklists and ratings, and T ratings of C behavior	Judge-rated overall quality of parental relationships (QPR) based on P interviews and diaries (items	Effects of divorce and QPR stronger and longer-lasting for boys than for girls. Boys from low QPR divorced homes showed more social isolation,

Table 2. (Cont.)

Study	Description of Sample	Point in Divorce Process	Dependent Measures[a]	Independent Measures[b]	Major Findings
	divorced homes; 48 matched intact families			included agreement in C-rearing, emotional support in C-rearing, tension in divorce, and competition; divided into 4 groups for MANOVA (intact vs divorced X high or moderate QPR vs low QPR)	aggression, dependency, impulsivity, immaturity, and oppositional behavior and less prosocial skills, productivity, and self-control than boys from other 3 groups at all 3 time periods. At 2 years, boys from low QPR intact homes showed more acting-out and aggression and less prosocial behavior than boys from high/moderate QPR divorced homes. Girls in low QPR divorced homes were more dependent, demanding, and whiny than girls in other 3 groups at 2 months and 1 year, but showed NS difference from girls in low QPR intact homes at 2 years.
Kanoy, Cunningham, White, & Adams, 1984	45 divorced (recruited from court records) and 44 married white Ms and 153 CN	No information provided	C-rated measures of family relationships and self-concept	M-rated inventory with subscales for overall quality of M-F, F-C, and M-C relationships	QFSR predicted C's perceptions of M's and F's demandingness but did not predict self-concept in regression analyses.
Kurdek, 1987	35 white, middle-class custodial Ms and C (15 boys, 20 girls) aged 6-17; recruited from court records	Separated mean of 13.11 months	C-rated CAPSI, UDQ, and CASQ; M-rated CAPSI, CERD, and CBCL (internalizing and externalizing scores); composite CWB score for each rater used in analyses	2 M-rated scales. Scale 1 included 18 items on cooperation and indirect competition. Scale 2 included 10 items on C's exposure since separation to Ps' arguments and verbal/physical hostility.	M-derived CWB composite correlated with Scale 1 (r = .36). NS cors between CWB and Scale 2.

Table 2. (Cont.)

Study	Description of Sample	Point in Divorce Process	Dependent Measures[a]	Independent Measures[b]	Major Findings
Luepnitz, 1986	43 nonclinical families with 91 CN; all custody types	Divorced mean of 3.5 years	PHCSC and P-ratings of C's psychosomatic and behavior problems and self-esteem	Judge-rated QFSR derived from self-report inventory; divided into low and high groups for ANOVA	CN in low QFSR families had lower self-esteem and more psychosomatic and behavior problems than those from high QFSR.
Nelson, 1981	16 girls and 15 boys aged 4-14 and custodial M; white; recruited from court records	Separated mean of 16.5 months	C-rated emotional adjustment; M- and T-rated BPC (personality and conduct problem subscales)	Predictors in multiple regression included 5-item QFSR measure (emotional and financial support, agreement on C-rearing and visitation, how well Ps get along, and number of court visits), current feelings towards FS, suddenness of divorce, marital satisfaction prior to separation, F-C contact, presence of F-substitute, M's social supports, length of time since separation, and SEC	QFSR and feelings toward FS did not predict CWB in stepwise multiple regression analysis.
Saayman & Saayman, 1989	62 white, middle-class Ps (39 Ms, 23 Fs) and 83 CN aged 5-16; recruited through court records, media, and workshops	Divorced mean of 2.8 years	P-rated RSA	Predictors in multiple regression analysis included QFSR scale (items on current conflict, support, and contacts); Divorce Category (i.e., competition); FAD; and Lawyer's Arbitration Style	QFSR scale NS in regression

Table 2. (Cont.)

Study	Description of Sample	Point in Divorce Process	Dependent Measures[a]	Independent Measures[b]	Major Findings
Shaw & Emery, 1987	40 custodial Ms and C aged 5-12 (21 girls, 19 boys); 75% white, 25% black scores)	Separated 2 months to 6 years (62.5% in past 2 years)	M-rated CBCL (internalizing and externalizing scores); C-rated PCS (social and cognitive scores)	Sum on "Acrimony Scale" (AS) (25 items on conflict and animosity over divorce issues); M's depression	Positive cors between AS and M's depression, C's internalizing behaviors, and C's tive competence. AS predicted variance in internalizing in regression, but not when M's depression was entered. Chi-square analysis showed high AS with high M's depression associated with high internalizing and externalizing.
Shybunko, 1988/89	15 M-custody divorced and 15 intact families; CN aged 9-12	Separated mean of 3.73 years	M- and T-rated CBCL (social competence and total behavior problems subscales); C-rated ego strength	M-rated inventory with subscales for quality of M-F, M-C, F-C, and siblings relationships; FES	CWB not predicted by QFSR or any subscale of FES in multiple regression analysis.
Slater & Haber, 1984	100 adolescents from intact homes, 50 from divorced (mean age 16.6); 53% white, 41% black	84% separated over 1 year	NSLCS; TSCS; STAI	FES ("conflict" subscale)	ANOVA (family type X sex X "conflict") found main effect of high "conflict" associated with lower internal control and self-esteem and higher anxiety. Main effects of sex and family type and interactions NS.

Note. C = child; CN = children; F = father; FS = former spouse; M = mother; P = parent; T = teacher; NS = not significant; cor = correlation; sig = significant.

[a]BPC = Behavior Problem Checklist (Quay & Peterson, 1975); CAPSI = Children's Attitudes Toward Parental Separation Inventory (Kurdek, 1987); CASQ = Children's Attributional Style Questionnaire (Seligman et al., 1984); CBCL = Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983); CERD = Children's Emotional Reactions to Divorce (Kurdek, 1987); NSLCS = Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale (1973); PCS = Perceived Competence Scale for Children (Harter, 1982); PHCSC = Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Test (1969); RSA = Rutter Scale A (Rutter, Tizard, & Whitmore, 1970); STAI = State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Speilberger, Gorusch, & Lushene, 1970); TSCS = Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (Fitts, 1965); UDQ = Understanding the Divorce Questionnaire (Kurdek, 1987). [b]FAD = Family Assessment Device (Epstein, Baldwin, & Bishop, 1983); FES = Family Environment Scale (Moos & Moos, 1981); PHS = Parental Harmony Scale (Hess & Camara, 1979).

Of the 14 measures of QFSR included in the studies, 7 had statistically significant relationships with a CSEWB variable and 7 did not. A closer look at operational definitions reveals consistent differences between the measures of the two groups. Studies that found no relationship used extremely global measures (e.g., "How well do you and your former spouse get along?" or "How satisfied are you with the quality of the relationship between you and your former spouse?") (Furstenberg & Seltzer, 1986; Kanoy, Cunningham, White, & Adams, 1984; Shybunko, 1988/89), scales with few or no items tapping competition (Nelson, 1981; Saayman & Saayman, 1988/89), or a scale with an equal number of conflict and competition items (Kurdek, 1987, Scale 2). Studies that found relationships used multiple-item scales that emphasized competition and/or cooperation (Ellison, 1983; Hess & Camara, 1979; Kurdek, 1987, Scale 1; Shaw & Emery, 1987) or divided the sample into low and high QFSR groups using ratings based largely on the amount of competition (Hetherington et al., 1979, 1982; Slater & Haber, 1984). This inconsistency across studies indicates that global assessment of the QFSR is an inadequate approach for examining its impact on CSEWB. The following review of studies on the effects of single dimensions of the QFSR reveals far more consistent findings.

Direct Effects of Coparental Conflict

The summary presented in Table 3 indicates that most studies on the impact of coparental conflict on CSEWB have found no relationship between the two variables. Of the 12 measures of conflict examined, only 2 (Kurdek & Berg, 1983; Kurdek & Blisk, 1983) consistently had

Table 3. Summary of Studies on Direct Effects of Coparental Conflict (CONF) on Children's Social-Emotional Well-Being

Study	Description of Sample	Point in Divorce Process	Dependent Measures[a]	Independent Measures[b]	Major Findings
Fulton, 1979	250 Fs and 310 Ms from contested or custody investigation cases plus a 10% random sample of non-contested cases; 96% white; 87% M-custody	2 years post-divorce	Single-item on how CN affected by divorce (positive, neutral, negative)	Frequency of marital CONF compared to other couples they know and amount of CONF during divorce process; divided into low and high groups for chi-square analyses	High marital CONF associated with Ms' perceptions of positive divorce effects. No association between divorce process CONF and Ms' perception of divorce effects or between either CONF variable and Fs' perception of divorce effects.
Furstenberg & Seltzer, 1986	1,423 CN aged 12-16 in 1981 chosen from 1976 representative sample of 2,279 if Ps divorced or at risk in 1976 plus random sample of stable families	More than 5 years post-divorce at Time 2 for most	Single-items on school adjustment, satisfaction with family life, and general adjustment rated by P, C, or T	Single-items on frequency of arguments before separation, change in amount of CONF since separation, and amount of current agreement on C-rearing matters	No association between any CONF measure and any CWB measure
Guidubaldi, Cleminshaw, Perry, Nastasi, & Lightel, 1986	341 1st, 3rd, and 5th graders (185 boys, 156 girls) from divorced homes at Time 1; 46 (25 boys, 21 girls) 2 years later at Time 2	Separated mean of 3.98 years at Time 1	39 social-emotional well-being variables from standardized measures	Single-item P-rating of amount of change in CONF from pre- to post-separation	Very few sig cors. At Time 1, NS cors between change in CONF and CWB for either boys or girls in 1st or 3rd grades. For boys in 5th grade, decreased CONF related to less frequent approaches to T and better conduct grades. For girls in 5th grade, decreased CONF related to less inattention but poorer peer relations. For boys, decreased CONF at Time 1 associated with less social overinvolvement, fewer negative feelings, and less frequent approach to T at Time 2. NS cors for girls at Time 2.

Table 3. (Cont.)

Study	Description of Sample	Point in Divorce Process	Dependent Measures[a]	Independent Measures[b]	Major Findings
Hodges, Buchsbaum, & Tierney, 1983	30 middle-class preschool CN from divorced homes and 60 from intact; mean age, 4.4 years	Separated mean of 2.5 years	M-rated anxiety, distractability, depression, acting-out and happiness; T-rated aggression, dependency, task orientation, withdrawal and anxiety	Summary scale (derived from questionnaire items) of amount of post-divorce CONF over parenting	NS cors between CONF and CWB for divorced group
Kurdek, 1987	35 white, middle-class custodial Ms and C (15 boys, 20 girls) aged 6-17; recruited from court records	Separated mean of 13.11 months	C-rated CAPSI, UDQ, and CASQ; M-rated CAPSI, CERD, and CBCL (internalizing and externalizing scores); composite CWB score for each rater used in analyses	GICS (20 items on extent of disagreement and argument over C-related issues, rights, and responsibilities)	NS cors between GICS and CWB
Kurdek & Berg, 1983	70 white, middle-class, custodial Ms and C (36 boys, 34 girls), mean age of 9.92	Separated mean of 13.17 months	C-rated CAPSI and UDQ; M-rated CAPSI and CERD; plus composite divorce adjustment score summed across 4 measures	GICS	Negative cors between GICS and both CAPSI's, CERD, and composite of divorce adjustment
Kurdek & Blisk, 1983	25 divorced, white, middle-class custodial Ms and C (9 boys, 16 girls)	Separated mean of 5.73 years	C-rated CAPSI, UDQ, PHCSC, NSLCS, and interpersonal reasoning scale; M-rated CAPSI and PIC	Single-item on frequency of arguments during contacts with FS	Negative cors between CONF and internal locus of control, interpersonal reasoning, divorce adjustment, social competence, social skills, achievement, and general adjustment. Positive cors between CONF and depression, withdrawal, hyperactivity, delinquency, and anxiety.

Table 3. (Cont.)

Study	Description of Sample	Point in Divorce Process	Dependent Measures[a]	Independent Measures[b]	Major Findings
Lowenstein & Koopman, 1978	60 boys aged 9-14; recruited from single-P organizations	Separated at least 1 year	CSEI	Single-item, 5-point measure of CONF	NS cor between CONF and self-esteem
McCombs, Forehand, & Brody, 1987	44 lower-middle-class adolescents (aged 11-15) and custodial Ms; recruited from court records	Divorced less than 1 year	T-rated RBPC (anxiety/withdrawal and conduct disorder subscales), PCS (social and cognitive subscales)	M-rated QCCS (conflict and support subscales) and QPIS (parental and nonparental subscales)	NS cors between CONF and CWB. All sig cors involved quantity of nonparental interaction with less interaction associated with higher CWB. In regression analyses, CONF added to predictive power of nonparental interaction for cognitive competence only.

Note. C = child; CN = children; F = father; FS = former spouse; M = mother; P = parent; T = teacher; NS = not significant; cor = correlation; sig = significant.

[a]CAPSI = Children's Attitudes Toward Parental Separation Inventory (Kurdek, 1987); CASQ = Children's Attributional Style Questionnaire (Seligman et al., 1984); CBCL = Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983); CERD = Children's Emotional Reactions to Divorce (Kurdek, 1987); CSEI = Coopersmith's Self-Esteem Inventory (1959); NSLCS = Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale (1973); PCS = Perceived Competence Scale for Children (Harter, 1982); PHCSC = Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Test (1969); PIC = Personality Inventory for Children (Wirt, Lachar, Klinedinst, & Seat, 1977); RBPC = Revised Behavior Problem Checklist (Quay & Peterson, 1983); UDQ = Understanding the Divorce Questionnaire (Kurdek, 1987). [b]GICS = General Interparental Conflict Scale (Kurdek, 1987); QCCS = Quality of Coparental Communication Scale (Ahrons, 1983); QPIS = Quantity of Parental Interaction Scale (Ahrons, 1983).

statistically significant negative relationships across measures of CSEWB. Therefore, the convergence of evidence supports the conclusion that the frequency of disagreements between former spouses is unrelated to CSEWB.

Direct Effects of Coparental Cooperation

As evident from Table 4, there is a relative dearth of research on the effects of coparental cooperation on CSEWB. This lack reflects both the unidimensional conceptualization of the QFSR and the concurrent emphasis on negative interaction and pathology that are typical in the divorce research. To the author's knowledge, only two studies have examined empirically the relationship between cooperation and CSEWB. Heath and MacKinnon (1988) found significant zero-order correlations between cooperation and social competence (positive for boys, negative for girls), but cooperation made no unique contribution to variance in the dependent variable in multiple regression analyses. McCombs, Forehand, and Brody (1987) found no significant correlations between cooperation and five measures of CSEWB, and cooperation emerged as a significant predictor only of children's grade point average (GPA) in multiple regression. Using qualitative research methods, however, scholars have suggested that cooperation is associated with positive divorce adjustment in children (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Kressel et al., 1980). Thus, there is insufficient data to draw a conclusion about the existence of a relationship between cooperation and CSEWB.

Table 4. Summary of Studies on Direct Effects of Coparental Cooperation (COOP) on Children's Social-Emotional Well-Being

Study	Description of Sample	Point in Divorce Process	Dependent Measures[a]	Independent Measures[b]	Major Findings
Heath & MacKinnon, 1988	80 custodial Ms and C aged 8-11; recruited from court records	Separated at least 1 year	C-rated PCS (social subscale)	Multiple regression analyses included COOP, F-C contact, and M's education and support system from M-rated family history questionnaire; C-rated parental behavior inventory	Sig cors between COOP and social competence (r = .43 for boys, r = -.29 for girls) but COOP NS predictor in regression.
McCombs, Forehand, & Brody, 1987	44 lower-middle-class adolescents (aged 11-15) and custodial Ms; recruited from court records	Divorced less than 1 year	T-rated RBPC (anxiety/withdrawal and conduct disorder subscales), PCS (social and cognitive subscales), and GPA	M-rated QCCS ("support"/COOP and conflict subscales) and QPIS (parental and nonparental subscales)	NS cors between COOP and CWB. All sig cors involved quantity of nonparental interaction with less interaction associated with higher CWB. In regression analyses, COOP added to predictive power of nonparental interaction for GPA only.

Note. C = child; F = father; M = mother; T = teacher; NS = not significant; cor = correlation; sig = significant.

[a]PCS = Perceived Competence Scale for Children (Harter, 1982); RBPC = Revised Behavior Problem Checklist (Quay & Peterson, 1983). [b]QCCS = Quantity of Coparental Communication Scale (Ahrons, 1983); QPIS = Quality of Parental Interaction Scale (Ahrons, 1983).

Direct Effects of Coparental Competition

In contrast to the inconsistent results for overall QFSR, the lack of effects for conflict, and the inconclusive data for cooperation, a significant relationship between coparental competition and CSEWB was reported for all 12 studies summarized in Table 5. It appears that competition adversely effects CSEWB whether it is expressed directly as verbal and/or physical aggression (Furstenberg & Seltzer, 1986; Hansen, 1982; Jacobson, 1978b; Johnston et al., 1987; Stolberg & Bush, 1985; Stolberg et al., 1987; Tschann et al., 1989; Walsh & Stolberg, 1988/89), indirectly as denigration and triangulation of the children (Johnston et al., 1987; Rosen, 1977, 1979; Tschann et al., 1989; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980), or through the court system in prolonged legal disputes and relitigation (Furstenberg & Seltzer, 1986; Saayman & Saayman, 1989).

It also appears that competition is detrimental for children whether it occurs before separation (Furstenberg & Seltzer, 1986; Jacobson, 1978b; Stolberg & Bush, 1985; Stolberg et al., 1987), during early separation (Jacobson, 1978b; Sandler et al., in press; Tschann et al., 1989; Walsh & Stolberg, 1988/89), or during distant separation (Johnston et al., 1987; Walsh & Stolberg, 1988/89). Two longitudinal studies have indicated that (a) children develop little immunity to coparental competition over time, and (b) the deleterious effects of early competition can be overcome if parents cease their hostilities (Hetherington et al., 1979, 1982; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

Table 5. Summary of Studies on Direct Effects of Coparental Competition (COMP) on Children's Social-Emotional Well-Being

Study	Description of Sample	Point in Divorce Process	Dependent Measures[a]	Independent Measures[b]	Major Findings
Fulton, 1979	250 Fs and 310 Ms from contested or custody investigation cases plus a 10% random sample of non-contested cases; 96% white; 87% mother-custody	2 years post-divorce	Single-item on how CN affected by divorce (positive, neutral, negative)	Amount of violence during marital arguments; divided into low and high groups for chi-square analyses	High marital violence associated with Ms' perceptions of positive divorce effects. No association between violence and Fs' perception of divorce effects.
Furstenberg & Seltzer, 1986	1,423 CN aged 12-16 in 1981 chosen from a 1976 representative sample of 2,279 if Ps divorced or at risk in 1976 plus random sample of stable families	More than 5 years post-divorce at Time 2 for most	Single-items on school adjustment, satisfaction with family life, and general adjustment rated by P, C, or T	Single-items on physical violence during marital arguments and whether or not Ps reached a divorce settlement	Both measures of COMP associated with poorer CWB
Hansen, 1982	36 M-custody preschool CN	No information provided	M- and T-rated scales of C's behavioral adjustment	Interview-based ratings of level of aggression exhibited during conflict	Aggressive conflict behavior after divorce related to poorer M-rated adjustment. Increased nonaggressive expression of anger related to increased nonaggressive discipline measures and affection toward the C and decreased M-C conflict.
Jacobson, 1978b	30 separated families (15 from crisis-intervention, 15 from court records) with 38 CN aged 3-13 living with M	Separated less than 12 months	M-rated LBCL	M-rated summary scale of 8 items on hostility and verbal and physical aggression rated for pre- and post-separation	Positive cors between pre-separation COMP and infantile aggression, overall aggression, social withdrawal, social sensitivity, fear, inhibition, overall severity level, rare deviance, and neurotic, somatic, and sexual behavior.

Table 5. (Cont.)

Study	Description of Sample	Point in Divorce Process	Dependent Measures[a]	Independent Measures[b]	Major Findings
					When Ps with no contact within 2 weeks before interview were dropped from sample, there were positive cors between post-separation COMP and social sensitivity, overall severity level, and rare deviance. Stronger findings for CN aged 7-13 than 3-6.
Johnston, Gonzalez, & Campbell, 1987	56 CN (28 boys, 28 girls) from custody- and access-disputed cases; low-middle income; 49% white, 9% Latin American, 11% Asian or South Pacific, 4% black, 27% interracial; two thirds M-custody, one third joint	Separated average of 32 months at Time 1; Time 2, 2 1/2 years later	Average of M's and F's ratings on CBCL (depression, withdrawal, somatic complaints, aggression, and total behavior problems subscales)	CTS (verbal and physical aggression subscales combined for single measure); clinical rating of frequency of C's involvement in Ps' conflicts by each P (6 items each); clinical rating of amount of role reversal between C and each P (8 items each)	At Time 1, F's involvement of C in conflict and F role reversal predicted total behavior problems (32% of variance); role reversal with M and F predicted depression (24%); and involvement in dispute by F and role reversal with M and F predicted aggression (28%). At Time 2, CTS at baseline and follow-up predicted total behavior problems (28%); CTS as baseline predicted depression (34%); CTS at baseline and follow-up and involvement in disputes by M and F predicted withdrawal (42%); CTS at follow-up and C's sex predicted somatic complaints (37%); and CTS at baseline and involvement in dispute by F predicted aggression (28%).
Rosen, 1977, 1979	92 middle-class South African white CN of divorce (45 boys, 47 girls) aged	Ps divorced between 6-10 years prior to interview when	Projective tests and clinical ratings of current adjustment	Retrospective interviews for ratings on COMP during and following divorce	CN from high COMP homes more poorly adjusted than those from low COMP. When asked to identify most distressing

Table 5. (Cont.)

Study	Description of Sample	Point in Divorce Process	Dependent Measures[a]	Independent Measures[b]	Major Findings
	9-28 when interviewed; 51 M-custody, 41 F-custody; drawn from court records; matched control group of 25 CN from intact families	subjects were 3 months to 16 years old			aspect of divorce, over half said denigration of one P by the other.
Saayman & Saayman, 1989	62 white, middle-class Ps (39 Ms, 23 Fs) and 83 CN aged 5-16; recruited through court records, media, and workshops	Divorced mean of 2.8 years	P-rated RSA	Predictors in multiple regression analysis included Divorce Category (deemed COMP for review) (3 groups based on whether divorce was contested, duration and costs of legal divorce, degree of interparental turbulence and hostility during legal process); overall current QFSR; FAD; Lawyer's Arbitration Style	CWB predicted by COMP (i.e., Divorce Category) and Roles subscale of FAD
Sandler, Wolchik, & Braver, in press	158 CN (56% girls, 44% boys) (65% M-custody, 7% F-custody, 28% joint custody) aged 8-15; recruited through court records and media	Separated mean of 16.5 months	P-rated CBCL (total pathology score) and C-rated anxiety, depression, and hostility	Number of negative divorce events experienced by C	CN rated stressfulness of 63 divorce-related events. Of 10 most stressful, 7 involved COMP. None of 10 least stressful involved COMP. CN rated 63 events as positive, negative, or neutral. Of 16 events consensually rated as negative, 9 involved COMP. Positive cor between number of negative events experienced and C-reported anxiety, depression, and hostility.

Table 5. (Cont.)

Study	Description of Sample	Point in Divorce Process	Dependent Measures[a]	Independent Measures[b]	Major Findings
Stolberg & Bush, 1985; Stolberg, Camplair, Currier, & Wells, 1987	82 custodial Ms and C aged 7-13 (43 boys, 39 girls) recruited from schools, Ps Without Partners, and newspaper ads; in 1987, 47 CN and Ms from intact families recruited through divorce group	Separated mean of 16.7 months	PHCSC; M-rated CBCL (internalizing and externalizing pathology scores; social, activities and school prosocial scores)	1985: preseparation POS included in path analysis with number of CN; M's education, employment, divorce adjustment, environmental change, and parenting skills; C's age, sex, environmental change, and time spent with F. 1987: preseparation POS included in canonical correlational analyses and ANOVA with CN's environmental change and M's environmental change, parenting skills, and divorce adjustment.	1985: POS included in 1 of 3 paths identified. A direct, unmediated relationship between POS and CWB was found with POS associated with more externalized and internalized pathology and fewer social skills. 1987: high POS associated with lower activity, social, and school prosocial skills and higher internalized and externalized pathology for both divorced and intact groups. First orthogonal mediator/adjustment function for divorced group found high single parenting skills and low POS associated with high social and activity scores and low internalizing scores.
Tschann, Johnston, Kline, & Wallerstein, 1989	178 first-born CN aged 2-18 with predominantly white, well-educated Ps of all custody types; recruited through court records, interested groups, and public speaking engagements; C and both Ps agreed to participate in counseling and research	Separated mean of 7.7 months	Clinician-rated C emotional adjustment (EA) (10 items on depression, anger, sense of powerlessness, self-esteem, ability to cope, and cognitive functioning); M-rated CBCL (total behavior problems subscale)	6 measures of COMP included in regression analyses: preseparation verbal and physical aggression (5 items); postseparation verbal and physical aggression (4 items); C involved in conflict by M and F (10 clinician-rated items); and modeling of ego-control by M and by F (4 clinician-rated items). Also included	All but 2 of 15 cors among the 6 COMP variables were sig (r = .59 for pre- and postseparation COMP; r = .47 for M and F involvement of C in conflict; r = -.38 for M involves C in conflict and models ego control). All cors between COMP variables and CWB variables were sig. For EA, 40% of variance accounted for in reduced model with no direct effects for any of 6 COMP items. For CBCL, 17% of variance accounted for by reduced model with F's

Table 5. (Cont.)

Study	Description of Sample	Point in Divorce Process	Dependent Measures[a]	Independent Measures[b]	Major Findings
				C's age, sex, and baby temperament; number of siblings, length of separation; SEC; time spent with visiting P; warm and rejecting P-C relationship	involvement of C in conflicts and low warmth and M's low modeling of ego-control predicting more behavior problems. Preseparation COMP had the strongest indirect effects for both EA and CBCL, affecting CWB through its effects on quality of P-C relationships.
Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980	60 families with 131 CN (48% boys, 52% girls) involved in divorce counseling; 88% white, 3% black, 9% interracial Asian; skewed toward middle to high SEC	6 months, 18 months, and 5 years post-separation	Interviews and observations yielded clinician ratings on 290 P items and 231 C items (dependent and independent variables)	See dependent measures	At 6 months, CN's stress, anxiety, and preoccupation with divorce associated with Ps' bitterness, hostility, and litigation. COMP more openly expressed with 6-18 year-olds and boys. Preschoolers and girls were shielded more. 9-18 year-olds recruited in alliances more often than younger CN. At 18 months, COMP associated with depression, especially for pre-adolescent boys. At 5 years, decreased COMP related to capacity to cope for CN of all ages. CN developed little immunity over time to COMP.
Walsh & Stolberg, 1988/89	23 boys, 16 girls of divorce recruited through purposive sampling	Separated mean of 37.5 months; sample divided into recent, moderate, and distant separation for some analyses	P-rated CBCL (internalized and externalized pathology scores); C-rated myths about divorce and affect questionnaire (happy, angry, fearful)	Current POS; parenting skills; good and bad divorce events for C	With variance due to C's age and sex removed, POS accounted for 10% of variance in externalized behavior problems. Sig interaction between POS and length of separation with high POS related to higher externalized behavior and anger of

Table 5. (Cont.)

Study	Description of Sample	Point in Divorce Process	Dependent Measures[a]	Independent Measures[b]	Major Findings
					recently separated (less than 21.5 months) only. POS did not effect internalized behavior problems until distant separation when high POS was associated with low anger but more anxiety, depression, and withdrawal.

Note. C = child; CN = children; F = father; FS = former spouse; M = mother; P = parent; T = teacher; NS = not significant; cor = correlation; sig = significant.

[a]CBCL = Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1983); LBCL = Louisville Behavior Checklist (Miller, 1974); PHCSC = Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (1969); RSA = Rutter Scale A (Rutter, Tizard, & Whitmore, 1970). [b]CTS = Conflict Tactic Scales (Straus, 1979); FAD = Family Assessment Device (Epstein, Baldwin, & Bishop, 1983); POS = Porter-O'Leary Scale of Overt Marital Hostility (1980).

Differential Effects of the QFSR on Dimensions of CSEWB

The important question of whether the QFSR has differential effects on various dimensions of CSEWB can be addressed by a careful examination of the literature summarized in Tables 2 through 5. Because coparental conflict and cooperation, for the most part, are unrelated to CSEWB, neither of these aspects of the QFSR appear to effect the various dimensions of CSEWB differently. However, the impact of coparental competition on CSEWB is very different.

The available data indicate that coparental competition has negative effects on both externalized and internalized dimensions of CSEWB following marital separation (Hess & Camara, 1979; Hetherington et al., 1979, 1982; Jacobson, 1978b; Johnston et al., 1987; Luepnitz, 1986; Sandler et al., in press; Shaw & Emery, 1987; Stolberg & Bush, 1985; Stolberg et al., 1987; Walsh & Stolberg, 1988/89). However, several scholars who have examined the effects of the quality of interparental relationships on the well-being of children from <u>intact families</u> have forwarded the conclusion that children respond to interparental hostility with externalized symptoms <u>rather</u> than internalized (Block, Block, & Morrison, 1981; Emery, 1982; Emery & O'Leary, 1982; Oltmanns, Broderick, & O'Leary, 1977; Rutter, 1971; Wolkind & Rutter, 1973). Thus, it appears that children in divorcing families do not necessarily follow the same pattern of response to parental hostility and competition as children in intact families.

Mediating Factors

Although the effects of contingent or mediating variables are beyond the scope of this study, it is important to mention those that have been identified in the literature. There is some evidence that the qualitative (i.e., symptom-specific) nature of children's responses to coparental competition varies by the length of time since separation and by whether just one or both parents act competitively. Several scholars have found that children were more likely to respond to interparental hostilities during early separation with aggression, and during distant separation with depression and withdrawal (Johnston et al., 1987; Walsh & Stolberg, 1988/89; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Also, Johnston et al. found that children were likely to respond to competition by only one parent with aggression, and to competition by both parents with withdrawal and depression.

In addition, the quantitative nature (i.e., severity) of children's responses to coparental competition appears to vary somewhat by the child's sex and age and the sex of the competitive parent. Several studies have found that the effects of competition were stronger for boys than for girls (Block et al., 1981; Emery, 1982; Emery & O'Leary, 1982; Guidubaldi, Cleminshaw, Perry, Nastasi, & Lightel, 1986; Hess & Camara, 1979; Hetherington et al., 1979, 1982; Porter & O'Leary, 1980; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). However, others have found no effects for the interaction of sex and coparental competition (Johnston et al., 1987; Slater & Haber, 1984; Walsh & Stolberg, 1988/89). There also is some evidence that late latency children (i.e., 8-12 year-olds) are

more vulnerable to poor quality coparental relationships than preschoolers, early school-aged children, or adolescents (Guidubaldi et al., 1986; Jacobson, 1978b; Johnston et al., 1987; Sandler et al., in press; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Finally, it appears that the father's competitive behaviors are more distressing to children than the mother's (Johnston et al., 1987; Sandler et al., in press).

Summary

Although the author has tried to provide a comprehensive review of the available literature on the impact of the QFSR on CSEWB, it is important in summary to focus on those few studies directly comparable to the current investigation. Only seven studies have examined the effects of post-separation coparental conflict, cooperation, and/or competition on CSEWB during approximately the first 18 months of separation. Coparental conflict was related negatively to children's emotional reactions and general divorce adjustment in one study (Kurdek & Berg, 1983), but was not related to overall divorce adjustment (Kurdek, 1987) or to anxiety/withdrawal, conduct disorders, social or cognitive competence, or GPA (McCombs et al., 1987) in two others. McCombs et al. have provided the only investigation of the effects of coparental cooperation on CSEWB during this period of divorce. They found no significant simple correlations between cooperation and five CSEWB variables, but cooperation emerged as a significant predictor of children's GPA in multiple regression analyses. Four investigations of coparental competition found significant detrimental effects on dimensions of CSEWB including social sensitivity, overall severity of

behavior problems, and rare deviance (Jacobson, 1978b); depression, anxiety, and hostility (Sandler et al., in press); emotional adjustment and total behavior problems (Tschann et al., 1989); and stress, anxiety, and depression (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). In addition, two studies using measures of the overall QFSR that emphasized competition and cooperation found that low quality coparental relationships had detrimental effects on children's general divorce adjustment (Kurdek, 1987) and aggression, social isolation, dependency, impulsivity, immaturity, oppositional behavior, demandingness, whining, prosocial skills, self-control, and productivity (Hetherington et al., 1979, 1982).

In sum, there is ample evidence that the QFSR has an important impact on both externalized and internalized dimensions of CSEWB early in the divorce transition. It also appears that (a) multidimensional measurement of the QFSR provides more interpretable results than global assessments, (b) coparental conflict has little effect on CSEWB, (c) coparental competition is detrimental to CSEWB, and (d) coparental competition is more important for CSEWB than either conflict or cooperation. However, no past study has examined the relative, unique effects of coparental conflict, competition, and cooperation. The author has sought to make a contribution by doing so using the methodology discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Data Set

The data used in this study were collected in 1986 as part of the Orientation for Divorcing Parents (ODP) project. The ODP is a prevention-oriented, community-based educational program that consists of five weekly, 2-hour sessions. It has been offered four times a year since 1984 by Child and Family Services, a non-profit community service agency in Knoxville, Tennessee. The program was initiated by Bill Swann, judge of the Fourth Circuit Court of Knox County. Based on his contention that intervention during the divorce process can facilitate adjustment, strengthen family relationships, and reduce the negative effects of divorce for children, Judge Swann requested that Child and Family Services develop and implement a program for divorcing parents in the local community. The ODP was designed and led by Phyllis Betz and the late Mary Evans, two licensed social workers.

After a 1-year pilot program, Cheryl Buehler, associate professor of family studies at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, agreed to evaluate the workshop. Dr. Buehler used a pre-post, treatment-control design to address three major research goals: (a) identification of factors that effect children's and parents' well-being following separation, (b) evaluation of the ODP's effectiveness for strengthening these factors, and (c) provision of data for program improvement.

This study helps accomplish the first goal in that it was designed to test a theoretical model of the impact of the QFSR on CSEWB following separation. Therefore, the treatment and control groups were combined, and only pretest scores were analyzed.

Sampling and Data Collection Procedures

Every parent involved in a divorce petition in the Fourth Circuit Court of Knox County was sent a letter from the Judge describing the ODP program and encouraging their participation. Because the ODP is offered once each season, parents were contacted and given the opportunity to participate within 3 months after filing for divorce. Those who contacted Child and Family Services with an interest in attending the ODP were sent a registration form and letter explaining the program. Ten days before the first session of the spring, summer, and fall of 1986 workshops, each registrant was mailed a cover letter and the 12-page, self-administered questionnaire to complete and bring with them to the first session (see Appendix C). The project director attended two sessions to explain the project and answer questions. Although participation in the research project was encouraged, it was not mandatory in order to comply with the human subjects requirement of voluntary participation and to meet the needs of those parents who would not attend the program if required to complete the survey. The questionnaire was returned by 148 of the 245 program participants. This yielded a 60% response rate.

In addition, 633 parents who chose not to attend the ODP workshop were asked to participate in the research project. A cover letter

(see Appendix C) and the questionnaire were mailed to these parents using Dillman's (1978) Total Design methodology, which includes mailing the questionnaire to nonrespondents at designated intervals. The postal service returned 95 letters marked "non-deliverable," three couples reconciled, and one couple experienced the death of a spouse. Therefore, the questionnaire potentially reached 530 divorcing parents, and 99 were returned completed. This yielded a 19% response rate for workshop nonparticipants. A partial explanation for the low response rate is that, because funds were limited, only one mailing was done in the spring. The response rate was 12%. Additional funds were raised so that three mailings could be done with future nonparticipants. This doubled the response rate to 24%, thus supporting Dillman's recommendation of three mailings.

When the ODP participants and nonparticipants are combined, 878 questionnnaires were distributed with 775 potentially reaching divorcing parents. A total of 247 questionnaires were returned for a 32% response rate. Of these, 193 (113 ODP participants and 80 nonparticipants) met the following criteria: (a) very little missing data, (b) physically separated spouses, (c) a target child between the ages of 3 and 18, and (d) a target child living primarily with one parent.

The sample then was divided into residential parents (RP) and nonresidential parents (NRP). This division was chosen for three reasons. First, the sample included 36 pairs of parents. Splitting these couples into separate subsamples was needed to help insure independence of the error terms in the data analysis. Second, research has indicated that the environmental and parenting contexts

and perceptions of divorce-related problems differ dramatically for residential mothers and nonresidential fathers (Hetherington et al., 1982), and that parents' residential status appears to be a more important determinant of these differences than their sex (Gersick, 1979; Spanier & Castro, 1979). And third, preliminary data analyses confirmed that residential status was a more meaningful criterion for division than sex for this sample of divorcing parents. With the sample divided, there were 125 RP (72 ODP participants and 53 nonparticipants) and 68 NRP (41 ODP participants and 27 nonparticipants).

Sample Characteristics

The total sample for this study included 125 mothers and 68 fathers. The RP subsample included 107 mothers (86%) and 18 fathers (14%). The NRP subsample included 18 mothers (26%) and 50 fathers (74%).

Although court records were used to identify the sample, only six (3%) of the respondents were black. An analysis of the court's records indicated that only 10 blacks (five couples) had filed for divorce in 1986. In terms of educational level, 23% of the RP had a college degree, 26% had some college or non-college training, 32% were high school graduates, and 7% were not high school graduates. Comparable figures for NRP were 35%, 37%, 16%, and 12%, respectively. Most RP (81%) and NRP (90%) were employed and worked a median of 40 hours per week. The modal occupational status for RP was clerical/sales and for NRP was professional. The median current net monthly income was $1,000 for RP and $1,100 for NRP. Most of the parents (80%) defined

their economic situation as "struggling" or "doing okay" (rather than "poor," "up and coming," or "comfortably affluent").

The mean age was 32 for RP and 33 for NRP. Both groups had been married a median of 10 years. It was the first marriage for about 78% of the sample. Of those who had been married before, 87% had been married one other time. The median length of separation was 6 months.

About 85% of these parents had either one or two children, with the remainder having either three or four. Parents with more than one child provided data for two children--the one they perceived as doing the best and the one they perceived as doing the worst. For this study, the target child in multiple child families was selected randomly from the two. There were 69 sons and 56 daughters for the RP sample, and 33 sons and 35 daughters for the NRP. RP provided data for 43 children between the ages of 3 and 5, 57 children between 6 and 12, and 25 between 13 and 18. These numbers were 27, 32, and 9, respectively, for NRP. In terms of geographic distance from the children, the NRP lived in a nearby city or closer in 89% of the cases.

Sample Representativeness

Three different procedures were used to evaluate the representativeness of this sample. Because ODP participants were overrepresented, the first procedure was to compare empirically workshop participants and nonparticipants on the control, independent, and dependent variables of the study. There were no group differences for child's sex or age; parent's sex or education; coparental competition or

conflict; or children's dependency, aggression, anxiety/depression, or productivity. Group differences existed for income, length of separation, and coparental competition. ODP participants had a higher mean income (t = 2.19, df = 165, p = .03), were more recently separated (χ^2 = 4.21, p = .04), and reported higher coparental competition (t = 2.30, df = 187, p = .02) than ODP nonparticipants.

The second procedure was to compare empirically the survey respondents and nonrespondents using data available from court records. There were no differences between the two groups on husband's age, wife's age, length of marriage, number of children, amount of child support awarded in the final decree, or whether the grounds for divorce were irreconcilable differences (i.e., no-fault) or fault categories.

The third procedure used to assess sample representativeness was to compare the sample survey data for RP with data from the 1986 Census for white, separated family householders (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1987). The sample of RP used for this study seemed to have a lower percentage of fathers (14% versus 20%) and mean monthly income ($1153 versus $1400) and were younger (32.1 versus 37.8 years) than the U.S. census sample. The two groups were comparable on number of children and educational attainment. Thus, the three procedures used to examine the representativeness of this sample indicated that it was fairly comparable to the U.S. white, separated family householder population and that it was not irreparably compromised by the overrepresentation of ODP participants or by nonrespondents' lack of participation.

Theoretical Model and Hypotheses

The theoretical model for this study is presented in Figure 1. Two major hypotheses are forwarded in the model. Because dependency, anxiety/depression, and aggression are antisocial dimensions of CSEWB (i.e., high levels of these variables decrease CSEWB) and productivity is a prosocial dimension (i.e., a high level increases CSEWB), hypothesis 2 is restated for both antisocial and prosocial variables to provide clarity. Also, two characteristics of the data collection methods used in this study require stipulations for all hypotheses. First, all variables in the model were operationalized with scales completed by divorcing parents. Second, data were collected a median of 6 months following separation. Therefore, for each variable in each hypothesis, the appropriate qualification would read "divorcing parents' perceptions of (variable) at a median 6 months post-separation." The hypotheses tested in this study are stated below.

1. Coparental conflict, competition, and cooperation are three interrelated but separate dimensions of the QFSR. Conflict is related positively to competition (1a) and negatively to cooperation (1b). Competition and cooperation are related negatively (1c).

2. CSEWB is related negatively to coparental competition (2a), positively to coparental cooperation (2b), and is unrelated to coparental conflict (2c). The effects of competition are stronger than those of conflict and cooperation (2d).

    2.1. Children's dependency, anxiety/depression, and aggression are related positively to coparental competition, negatively

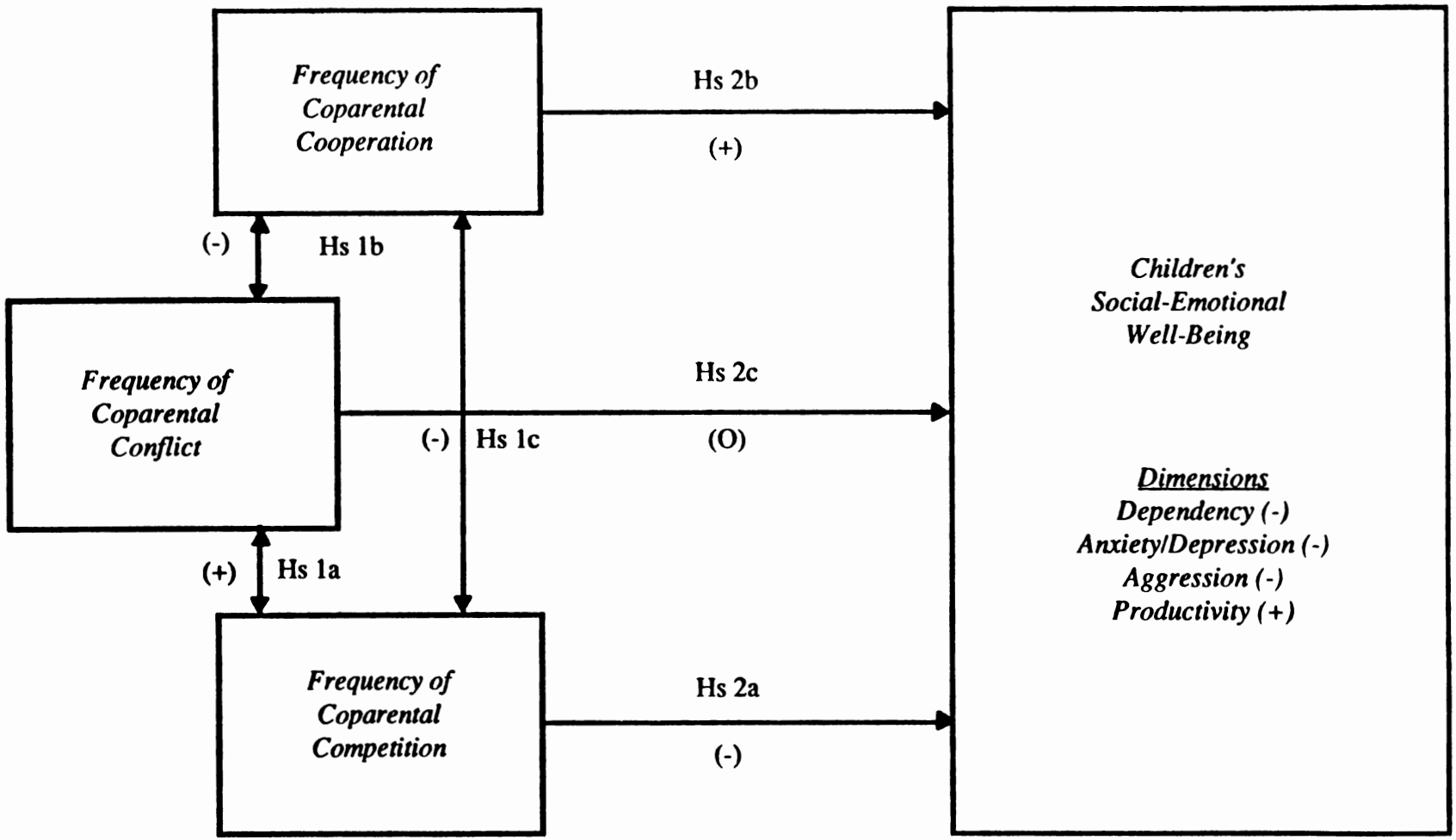

Figure 1. Theoretical Model for Study.

to coparental cooperation, and are unrelated to coparental conflict.

2.2. Children's productivity is related negatively to coparental competition, positively to coparental cooperation, and is unrelated to coparental conflict.

Measures

Dependent Variables

CSEWB was measured by a revision of the Personal Adjustment and Role Skills (PARSII) scale and its shorter version, the Child and Adolescent Adjustment Profile (CAAP) scale (Ellsworth, 1978, 1979; Pett, 1979, 1982). These instruments were designed for use by significant others (e.g., parents, teachers, and treatment staff) to rate children's behavior as observed in the previous month. The scales were chosen because they (a) have been validated for children between the ages of 3 and 18, (b) include both antisocial and prosocial and both internalized and externalized subscales, (c) underwent a rigorous developmental process, and (d) are relatively short.

The development of the PARSII and CAAP scales occurred in stages. The ultimate goal of this process was to construct a reliable, valid, and efficient scale that contained only those items that best measured stable and relevant dimensions of children's social adjustment. During this process, ratings from a total of 510 individuals including 236 parents of children referred for mental health services, 154 parents of non-referred (normal) children, 34 parents of probationers,

49 probation officers, and 37 teachers were submitted to a series of tests of validity and reliability. An original pool of 292 items was reduced to 55 items for the PARSII and 20 for the CAAP. These items measure five dimensions of adjustment: dependency, withdrawal, peer relations, aggression, and productivity. The PARSII also contains an anxiety/depression subscale.

Items were evaluated for inclusion in the instruments using a number of criteria. First, evidence of content validity was provided by the ranked judgements of treatment staff as to the importance of each item for clinically evaluating children's adjustment (Ellsworth, 1978). Second, evidence of construct validity was provided by factor analyses. High loadings on the one predicted factor and low loadings on the other factors indicated that items measured a single adjustment construct and that the scale discriminated the various constructs. Factor coefficients for the 20 CAAP items ranged from .53 to .85 on the predicted dimension with .39 the highest loading on a secondary factor (Ellsworth, 1979). Evidence of construct validity also was provided by stable and high loadings across different groups of children (i.e., 6-11 year olds, 12-18 year olds, girls, and boys) and by subscale intercorrelations ($\underline{r}$ = .22 to .42) that indicated a large degree of independence between dimensions (Ellsworth, 1979). Third, evidence of concurrent, criterion-related validity was provided by the scales' sensitivity to differences between groups known to differ in adjustment. The PARSII clearly discriminated between children referred for mental health treatment and nonreferred children on all six dimensions (Ellsworth, 1978), and the CAAP discriminated between

referred children, probationers, and nonreferred children on all five dimensions (Ellsworth, 1979). Also, the PARSII demonstrated sensitivity to expected changes in adjustment with significant differences between pre- and post-treatment scores on all six dimensions for a group of 34 children referred to mental health centers (Ellsworth, 1978). Finally, alpha coefficients ranging from .80 to .90 and test-retest correlations ranging from .78 to .89 for the five CAAP subscales provided evidence of acceptable interitem consistency and test-retest reliability (Ellsworth, 1979).

The source of data is an important factor to consider when estimating the validity of a measure. Paired t-test comparisons of 35 adolescents' self-report ratings and their divorced parents' ratings revealed no differences between the two groups on the PARSII measures of peer relations, dependency, productivity, and anxiety/depression. However, parents' ratings of aggression (M = 27.51) were higher than the adolescents' (M = 24.51) (t = -2.48, df = 34, p < .02); and parents' ratings of withdrawal (M = 17.29) were lower than the adolescents' (M = 21.57) (t = 3.68, df = 34, p < .001) (Pett, 1982). These findings provide some credence for the sole use of parents' ratings on the PARSII as an evaluation of CSEWB.

The major differences between the PARSII and CAAP instruments are the total number of items and inclusion of an anxiety/depression subscale. A 30-item, expanded version of the CAAP was used in this study. The measure included the most important items (as indicated by factor loadings) in each subscale of the PARSII and CAAP and retained the anxiety/depression subscale, an important dimension to include in

a study of children from divorcing families (Emery, 1982; Johnston et al., 1987; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980).

Using the data from this sample of divorcing parents, a series of factor analyses using principal components extraction and varimax rotation were conducted separately for RP and NRP subsamples to determine if the factor structure reported by Ellsworth (1979) and Pett (1979) was maintained. In the first analysis, all 30 items were included in a six-factor extraction because Ellsworth originally conceptualized a six-dimension adjustment construct. Neither the peer relations nor the withdrawal items factored separately for both RP and NRP and, therefore, were dropped. The remaining 21 items were reanalyzed using a four-factor extraction. Each item was evaluated using two criteria: (a) a minimum coefficient of .50 on the appropriate primary factor, and (b) a minimum difference of .20 between the primary and secondary factor coefficients. An additional seven items were deleted because they did not meet these criteria for both samples. The remaining 14 items were included in a final series of factor analyses. The factor structures remained stable for both sets of parents with analyses run with missing data both deleted and replaced with item means, and using both four-factor and default extraction critera (i.e., across eight analyses). This lends considerable support for the construct and discriminate validity of the four subscales used in this study: dependency (four items), anxiety/depression (three items), aggression (three items; two included for both subsamples, one unique for each subsample), and productivity (four items).

Tables 6 and 7 present the item factor coefficients for the revised measures used in this study. All items were rated using a 4-point response scale ranging from 1 (never) to 4 (often). Alpha coefficients for RP and NRP were .84 and .79 for dependency, .72 and .70 for anxiety/depression, .83 and .80 for aggression, and .78 and .82 for productivity, respectively.

Independent Variables

A brief description of the three scales used to measure the coparental variables in the current study and the available information about their validity and reliability are presented below. Because empirically testing the dimensionality of the QFSR is a major objective of this investigation, the measures will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 4. Results of factor analyses as well as a listing of items included in each scale will be presented in that discussion.

The measure of current coparental conflict used in this study was adapted from Ahrons' (1981, 1983) Content of Coparental Interaction Scale. For the purposes of the current study, Ahrons' stem asking about the frequency of discussions was changed to ask about the frequency of disagreements or arguments over 10 childrearing activities and issues such as child-related finances and the children's divorce adjustment. It should be noted that the scale measured conflict in general and did not determine whether children were aware of or present during their parents' disagreements. Responses ranged from 1 (always) to 5 (never). Reversing and averaging the responses yielded a scale score with high values indicating high levels of conflict.

Table 6. Residential Parents' Factor Coefficients and Cronbach's Alphas for Children's Social-Emotional Well-Being Subscales

Items	Coefficients I	II	III	IV
I. Dependency (alpha = .84)				
1. Asked for help when didn't need it?	.89	-.05	.15	.07
2. Wanted help in things s/he could have done on own?	.85	-.14	-.00	.06
3. Became discouraged when attempted something on own?	.71	-.02	.30	.26
4. Asked unnecessary questions instead of working on own?	.69	-.18	.13	.27
II. Productivity (alpha = .78)				
1. Done work carefully?	-.04	.84	-.13	.08
2. Stayed with task or assignment until finished?	-.09	.84	-.26	-.06
3. Made full use of abilities?	-.14	.69	.13	-.31
4. Completed work without being checked upon?	-.10	.66	-.14	.03
III. Aggression (alpha = .83)				
1. Picked quarrels with others?	.15	-.08	.86	.22
2. Stirred up others into arguments or hitting?	.12	-.14	.85	.15
3. Became upset if others did not agree with him/her?	.19	-.24	.67	.27
IV. Anxiety/depression (alpha = .72)				
1. Seemed sad?	.14	.02	.11	.82
2. Complained about problems?	.22	-.07	.21	.77
3. Said people didn't care about him/her?	.11	-.07	.28	.65

Note. Stem for all items was "Please describe this child's behavior as you have observed it during the past month." Response categories were 1 (never), 2 (rarely), 3 (sometimes), and 4 (often).

Table 7. Nonresidential Parents' Factor Coefficient and Cronbach's Alphas for Children's Social-Emotional Well-Being Subscales

Items	Coefficients I	II	III	IV
I. Productivity (alpha = .82)				
1. Done work carefully?	.87	-.20	.02	-.07
2. Stayed with task or assignment until finished?	.82	-.08	-.02	-.11
3. Made full use of abilities?	.72	-.05	-.24	-.04
4. Completed work without being checked upon?	.71	-.19	-.19	-.21
II. Dependency (alpha = .79)				
1. Asked unnecessary questions instead of working on own?	-.09	.79	.00	.22
2. Wanted help in things s/he could have done on own?	-.04	.78	.04	-.02
3. Asked for help when didn't need it?	-.27	.73	.09	.08
4. Became discouraged when attempted something on own?	-.18	.67	.08	.40
III. Aggression (alpha = .80)				
1. Picked quarrels with others?	-.14	.12	.86	.22
2. Stirred up others into arguments or hitting?	-.04	.18	.82	.03
3. Made cruel or critical remarks to others?	-.18	-.14	.76	.22
IV. Anxiety/depression (alpha = .70)				
1. Seemed sad?	-.11	.04	.08	.88
2. Said people didn't care about him/her?	-.16	.13	.26	.66
3. Complained about problems?	-.08	.35	.14	.63

Note. Stem for all items was "Please describe this child's behavior as you have observed it during the past month." Response categories were 1 (never), 2 (rarely), 3 (sometimes), and 4 (often).

Information provided by past users indicates that the scale has adequate validity and reliability. Ahrons (1983) conducted a pilot study to determine what issues typically are addressed during coparental interactions. Based on a content analysis of these minimally structured interviews, the 10 issues included in the scale were identified. This procedure provided evidence of content validity. Evidence for the scale's construct validity was provided when Ahrons' hypothesis that the frequency of coparental interaction would be related positively to fathers' involvement with the children was supported (r = .71 for mothers, .59 for fathers; $p < .001$). Evidence of internal consistency reliability has been provided by alpha coefficients of .93 (Ahrons, 1983; Goldsmith, 1980) and, when used to measure conflict as in the current study, .95 (Kurdek, 1987) and .86 (Kurdek & Berg, 1983). Also, evidence of inter-rater reliability has been provided by paired t-tests that showed no difference between mothers' and fathers' ratings for either Ahrons' sample ($t(53) = 1.68$, $p > .05$) or Goldsmith's sample ($t(43) = 0.90$, $p > .05$).

Data from the sample in the current study also provided evidence of internal consistency reliability. Cronbach's alphas were .95 for RP and .94 for NRP. Also, the results of factor analyses, which will be presented in Chapter 4, provided evidence of the scale's construct validity.

The measure of current coparental competition used in this study was adapted from Kurdek's (1987) Cooperative Parenting scale. Kurdek's scale included 18 items and tapped both competition and cooperation as conceptualized in this paper using a conflict-theory

perspective. He reported an alpha coefficient of .61. Six Likert-type items addressing competition were drawn from Kurdek's scale. These items assessed the frequency with which each spouse denigrates the other and uses the children as informants and allies. Responses ranged from 1 (always) to 5 (never). Reversing and averaging the responses yielded a scale score with high values indicating high levels of competition. The resulting instrument was judged by this author to have adequate content validity based on the definition of coparental competition developed from conflict theory. Also, the results of factor analyses using data from the current sample provided evidence for the scale's construct validity. Cronbach's alphas of .70 (six items) for RP and .63 (four items) for NRP provided evidence of marginal to adequate internal consistency reliability.

Current coparental cooperation was measured with seven Likert-type items adapted from the Coparental Support subscale of Ahrons' (1983) Quality of Coparental Communication scale. The items assessed the frequency with which each spouse provides emotional support and acts as a resource for the other, accommodates the other's needs for changed plans, and encourages the children to maintain an active involvement with their other parent. Responses ranged from 1 (always) to 5 (never). Reversing and averaging the responses yielded a scale score with high values indicating high levels of cooperation.

The scale was judged by this author to have adequate content validity. Evidence of construct validity has been provided by three analyses. First, Ahrons (1983) found significant correlations (r = .43 for men, .58 for women; $p < .001$) between subject's self-

report ratings on the scale and clinician/interviewer ratings of the QFSR. Second, Ahrons' hypothesis that coparental cooperation would be related positively to fathers' involvement with the children was supported (r = .61, p < .001). Third, the results of factor analyses using data from the current study provided empirical support for the scale's construct validity. Evidence of adequate internal consistency reliability has been provided by alpha coefficients of .75 (Ahrons, 1983) and .82 (Goldsmith, 1980) in past studies, and .82 (seven items) for RP and .83 (six items) for NRP in the current study. Finally, evidence of inter-rater reliability was provided by Goldsmith's (1980) paired t-test comparison that showed no difference between mothers' and fathers' ratings on the scale ($t(43)$ = .08, p > .05).

Control Variables

Six background factors that seem to influence perceptions of CSEWB following separation were included in the analyses to control for extraneous variance in CSEWB (Pedhazur, 1982). Included as control variables were the child's age and sex, the respondent's education and income (indicators of the family's socioeconomic status), the respondent's sex, and the length of time since separation. Single-item measures of these variables were included in the individual and family background data section of the survey (see Appendix C for items).

Analytic Techniques

The hypotheses were tested using factor analyses, correlational procedures, chi-square analyses, MANOVA, and stepwise multiple regression. To facilitate organization of this paper, the plan of analysis will be discussed in further detail in the following chapter.

Summary

In sum, a self-report questionnaire was used to gather data from a sample of 193 divorcing parents drawn from court records. Revisions of existing instruments were used to measure parents' perceptions of the frequency of coparental conflict, competition, and cooperation and of the target child's dependency, aggression, anxiety/depression, and productivity at a median 6 months following separation. A model proposing the dimensionality of the QFSR, the interrelatedness of its dimensions, and the relationships among the three coparental variables and the four CSEWB variables was presented. The plan of analysis and results are presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

PLAN OF ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The data from residential parents (RP) and nonresidential parents (NRP) were analyzed separately using SPSS-X (SPSS, Inc., 1988). A criterion of $p < .05$ was used for all reported tests of significance to assess Type I statistical error (the probability that a nonsignificant result in the population will be mistakenly judged as statistically meaningful).

Missing data were replaced with item means or medians. The decision to handle missing data in this way was made after finding comparable results for analyses conducted with missing data deleted listwise and with missing data replaced. Therefore, for statistical and ethical reasons (i.e., respecting subjects' participation), all respondents with small amounts of missing data were included in the study. (Five subjects were dropped because of extensive missing data.)

Means and standard deviations for the independent, control, and dependent variables are presented in Table 8, which also presents the results of independent t-test comparisons for each variable by respondent's residential status. Only 2 of the 11 comparisons showed statistically significant differences. NRP reported higher levels of coparental cooperation and income than RP. This difference in income was expected because NRP were more likely to be fathers, whereas RP were more likely mothers ($\chi^2(1, N = 193) = 64.9, \phi = .59$).

Paired t-test analyses also were conducted to compare respondents' perceptions of their own coparental behaviors to their perceptions of

Table 8. Means, Standard Deviations, and T-Test Comparisons by Residential Status for Independent, Control, and Dependent Variables

	Residential Parents (n = 125)		Nonresidential Parents (n = 68)		
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	t
Conflict[a]	2.21	0.97	2.46	0.98	-1.68
Competition[a]	1.77	0.61	1.89	0.67	-1.28
Cooperation[a]	3.23	0.80	3.60	0.87	-2.96*
Age of child	8.02	4.32	7.79	4.08	0.35
Length of separation[b]	8.92	10.05	8.10	8.35	0.57
Education[c]	4.40	1.63	4.90	1.92	-1.90
Income	1153.	791.	1810.	2106.	-2.48*
Dependency[d]	2.52	0.72	2.41	0.64	1.07
Anxiety/depression[d]	2.35	0.72	2.24	0.62	1.06
Aggression[d]	2.20	0.74	2.01	0.72	1.75
Productivity[d]	3.13	0.61	3.08	0.62	0.53

[a]Range = 1 (never) to 5 (always). [b]In months. [c]Range = 1 (grade school or less) to 8 (graduate degree). [d]Range = 1 (never) to 4 (often).

*$p < .05$, two-tailed.

their former spouse's coparental behaviors. (These comparisons were calculated by separating the self and former spouse items included in the cooperation and competition scales into four separate subscales.) As expected, respondents perceived themselves as more cooperative ($\underline{t}_{RP}$ (124) = 16.47; $\underline{t}_{NRP}$ (67) = 3.69) and less competitive ($\underline{t}_{RP}$ (124) = -6.06; $\underline{t}_{NRP}$ (67) = -7.60) than their former spouses.

The correlation matrix presented in Table 9 indicates that most of the correlations among predictors were low. However, correlations of .39 to .43 were found for coparental cooperation and competition (NRP only) and for respondents' education and income. All but 1 of the 12 correlations among dependent variables were significant with coefficients ranging from .19 to .49. However, these pair-wise correlations accounted for only 4% to 24% ($\underline{r}^2$) of the variance in the dependent variables, indicating that the subscales measured different aspects of CSEWB as rated by their parents.

Hypothesis I

The first hypothesis posited the dimensionality of the QFSR and the nature of the relationships among coparental conflict, competition, and cooperation. This was tested with factor analyses, zero-order correlations, and chi-square analyses.

Factor analysis was used to examine the structure of the QFSR construct. The 23 items from the measures of coparental conflict, competition, and cooperation were analyzed specifying a three-factor solution, principal components extraction, and varimax rotation. Results were assessed using two criteria: (1) a minimum coefficient

Table 9. Zero-Order Correlations among Variables for Residential Parents (Upper Triangle) and Nonresidential Parents (Lower Triangle)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Conflict		.14	.16*	-.12	-.05	-.21*	-.10	.00	.09	-.14	.13
2. Competition	.33*		-.27*	-.05	-.01	.07	.21*	-.01	.14	.01	-.12
3. Cooperation	-.16	-.40*		.05	.23*	-.16*	.09	.02	.08	-.00	.11
4. Education	-.00	-.04	.03		.43*	-.18*	.02	.05	.06	.08	.12
5. Income	-.00	-.06	.18	.39*		-.19*	.23*	.01	.17*	-.02	.06
6. Length of separation	-.12	-.04	.03	-.18	-.14		.02	-.02	-.14	-.03	-.05
7. Child's age	.08	.02	-.09	.03	-.02	-.01		-.29*	.24*	-.06	-.06
8. Dependency	-.11	.25*	-.01	.00	-.11	.09	-.32*		.42*	.40*	-.27*
9. Anxiety/ depression	-.08	.42*	-.14	.08	.02	.06	.19	.44*		.49*	-.19*
10. Aggression	.10	.40*	-.25*	.07	-.08	-.16	.10	.19	.40*		-.34*
11. Productivity	.10	-.11	.39*	.07	.27*	.06	.09	-.36*	-.33*	-.29*	

Note. n = 125 for residential parents; n = 68 for nonresidential parents.

*$p < .05$.

of .50 on the hypothesized primary factor, and (2) a minimum difference of .20 between the primary and secondary factor coefficients.

Tables 10 and 11 present the results of the factor analyses. The hypothesis that coparental conflict, competition, and cooperation are three separate dimensions of the QFSR was supported, providing evidence for the construct validity of the three measures. For RP, all 23 items met both criteria. For NRP, 20 of the 23 items met the criteria. The remaining three items loaded on the hypothesized primary factor but did not meet criterion #2. Therefore, one item from the coparental cooperation subscale and two items from the coparental competition subscale were deleted for NRP.

Pearson correlations were used to test the direction and strength of the relationships among coparental conflict, competition, and cooperation. The hypothesis that competition and cooperation are related negatively was supported for both samples (r_{RP} = -.27; r_{NRP} = -.40). The hypothesis that conflict is related positively to competition was supported for NRP, but the correlation did not reach significance for RP (r_{NRP} = .33; r_{RP} = .14, p = .06). Surprisingly, the hypothesis that conflict is related negatively to cooperation was not supported for either group of parents (r_{RP} = .16, p < .05; r_{NRP} = -.16, p = .10). This procedure also provided additional support for the hypothesis that coparental conflict, competition, and cooperation are separate dimensions of the QFSR because coefficients of determination (r^2) indicated that between 84% and 98% of the variance in each variable was independent from a second variable.

Table 10. Residential Parents' Factor Coefficients and Cronbach's Alphas for Quality of Coparental Relationship Subscales

Items	Coefficient I	II	III
I. Conflict (alpha = .95)*			
1. Planning special events in the children's lives	.91	.05	-.00
2. Personal problems the children might be having	.89	.13	.12
3. Daily decisions regarding the children's lives	.89	.03	.11
4. The children's school or medical problems	.88	.07	.16
5. Your coparenting relationship	.85	.07	.01
6. Problems you each are having raising the children	.84	.12	.01
7. Showing interest in the children's accomplishments and progress	.84	.03	.02
8. How the children are adjusting to the separation	.83	.14	-.00
9. Finances related to the children	.68	.09	.02
10. Major decisions regarding the children's lives	.54	-.07	.02
II. Cooperation (alpha = .82)			
1. I provide my spouse emotional support for dealing with the children.	.10	.78	-.08
2. How often is your spouse a resource to you in raising the children?	.02	.74	-.26
3. My spouse tries to help out if I need to change plans for taking care of the children.	.06	.71	-.10
4. My spouse provides me emotional support for dealing with the children.	.10	.70	-.18
5. I try to help out if my spouse needs to change plans for taking care of the children.	.06	.65	-.04
6. I encourage my children to maintain an active involvement with their other parent.	.25	.61	-.15
7. How often are you a resource to your spouse in raising the children?	-.08	.59	.13
III. Competition (alpha = .70)			
1. My spouse encourages the children to side with him/her.	.14	-.17	.69
2. My spouse says bad things about my character to the children.	-.01	-.30	.67
3. My spouse uses the children to get information about my personal life.	.20	-.12	.66
4. In encourage the children to side with me.	-.14	.05	.64
5. I use the children to get information about my spouse's personal life.	.03	.13	.53
6. I say bad things about my spouse's character.	.08	-.14	.52

Note. n = 125. Range = 1 (never) to 5 (always).

*Stem for conflict items was "How often do you and your husband/wife disagree or argue about the following areas of child rearing?"

Table 11. Nonresidential Parents' Factor Coefficients and Cronbach's Alphas for Quality of Coparental Relationship Subscales

Items	Coefficient I	II	III
I. Conflict (alpha = .94)[a]			
1. The children's school or medical problems	.89	-.06	-.06
2. Planning special events in the children's lives	.87	-.03	-.13
3. Personal problems the children might be having	.85	-.10	.20
4. Problems you each are having raising the children	.83	-.18	.16
5. How the children are adjusting to the separation	.82	.12	.20
6. Showing interest in the children's accomplishments and progress	.81	-.03	-.20
7. Finances related to the children	.77	.11	.14
8. Daily decisions regarding the children's lives	.77	-.13	.12
9. Your coparenting relationship	.75	.05	.33
10. Major decisions regarding the children's lives	.60	-.22	.26
II. Cooperation (alpha = .84)			
1. My spouse tries to help out if I need to change plans for taking care of the children.	-.28	.80	-.14
2. How often is your spouse a resource to you in raising the children?	-.14	.75	-.24
3. I provide my spouse emotional support for dealing with the children.	.01	.75	-.15
4. How often are you a resource to your spouse in raising the children.	.17	.72	.12
5. I try to help out if my spouse needs to change plans for taking care of the children.	.01	.70	.17
6. My spouse provides me emotional support in dealing with the children.	-.07	.66	-.32
7. I encourage my children to maintain an active involvement with their other parent.	-.05	.24	-.24
III. Competition (alpha = .63)			
1. My spouse encourages the children to side with him/her.	.18	-.40	.67
2. I encourage the children to side with me.	.03	-.02	.65
3. I use the children to get information about my spouse's personal life.	-.09	.12	.59
4. My spouse says bad things about my character to the children.[b]	.02	-.44	.57
5. My spouse uses the children to get information about my private life.	.33	-.20	.54
6. I say bad things about my spouse's character.[b]	.29	-.03	.42

Note. n = 68. Range = 1 (never) to 5 (always).

[a]Stem for conflict items was "How often do you and your husband/wife disagree or argue about the following areas of child rearing?" [b]Item deleted from scale for nonresidential parents because it did not meet criteria.

Finally, chi-square analyses were used to assess both dimensionality and interrelatedness. The scale means were used to split subjects into low-level and high-level groups for coparental conflict, competition, and cooperation. Cross-tabulations were done for conflict by competition, conflict by cooperation, and competition by cooperation. The chi-square and phi statistics were used to test the dependence and strength of association, respectively. The percentages of respondents in low/low plus high/high versus low/high plus high/low categories provided additional information on the dimensionality of the QFSR.

The results of the chi-square analyses are presented in Table 12. Both the hypothesized separateness and the hypothesized negative association between coparental cooperation and competition were supported for both samples. About 30% of the parents reported the low cooperation/high competition combination and about 34% reported the high cooperation/low competition combination. This pattern supports the theoretical idea that competition and cooperation are two extremes of a single, bipolar variable. Importantly, however, about 36% of the parents reported either low-low or high-high combinations. This provides evidence for the idea that competition and cooperation represent two discreet theoretical dimensions that <u>can</u> simultaneously coexist within a FSR at mutually high or mutually low levels even though their <u>tendency</u> to be associated negatively is statistically significant.

The hypothesized separateness of coparental conflict and competition was supported for both samples. However, the hypothesized positive association between the two variables was supported for NRP, but

Table 12. Chi-Square Analyses of Quality of Coparental Relationship Variables

	Lo-Lo	Hi-Hi	Lo-Hi	Hi-Lo	Lo-Lo Hi-Hi	Lo-Hi Hi-Lo	X^2	Phi
				Cooperation by Competition				
Residential	21 (16.8)	23 (18.4)	38 (30.4)	43 (34.4)	44 (35.2)	81 (64.8)	9.74*	.30
Nonresidential	12 (17.6)	13 (19.1)	20 (29.4)	23 (33.8)	25 (36.7)	43 (63.2)	3.73*	.26
				Conflict by Competition				
Residential	44 (35.2)	29 (23.2)	32 (25.6)	20 (16.0)	73 (58.4)	52 (41.6)	2.83	.17
Nonresidential	24 (35.3)	19 (27.9)	14 (20.6)	11 (16.2)	43 (63.2)	25 (36.8)	3.71*	.26
				Conflict by Cooperation				
Residential	39 (31.2)	29 (23.2)	37 (29.6)	20 (16.0)	68 (54.4)	57 (45.6)	.93	.10
Nonresidential	16 (23.5)	14 (20.6)	22 (32.4)	16 (23.5)	30 (44.1)	28 (55.9)	.46	.11

Note. n = 125 for residential parents; n = 68 for nonresidential parents. Cell statistics expressed as n (%).

*$p < .05$.

did not reach statistical significance for RP ($\chi^2(1, N = 125) = 2.83$, $p = .09, \phi = .17$). About 35% of parents reported low levels of conflict and competition, and about 23% of RP and 28% of NRP reported high levels of both variables. However, about 42% of RP and 37% of NRP fell into the low-high combination groups with 16% of parents reporting high conflict but low competition.

The percentages of respondents reporting the four combinations of coparental conflict and cooperation were not statistically different for either RP or NRP. Therefore, the hypothesis that cooperation and conflict are two separate dimensions of the coparental relationship was supported. However, the hypothesis that they are associated negatively was not supported.

Hypothesis 2

The first part of hypothesis 2 posited the nature of the relationships among the QFSR (independent) and CSEWB (dependent) variables. Because of moderate intercorrelations among the dependent variables, multivariate regression was run with three independent variables (coparental conflict, competition, and cooperation), four continuous background variables (child's age, respondent's income and educational level, and length of separation), two dummied background variables (child's sex and respondent's sex), and four dependent variables (children's dependency, anxiety/depression, aggression, and productivity). A stepwise regression technique was used for each significant dependent variable. This procedure was chosen because of its relative efficiency in specifying a reduced model that includes only those

predictor variables which make a statistically significant unique contribution toward explaining variance in the criterion variable.

The Pillais multivariate test (approximately distributed as an F test and detailed below) was significant for both samples, indicating that in general, CSEWB postseparation can be predicted by the QFSR.

	n	df	Approx. F
RP	125	36, 460	2.13
NRP	68	36, 232	2.24

The results of the univariate tests from the multivariate regression analyses are presented in Table 13. For RP, the only significant dependent variable was anxiety/depression. For NRP, all four dependent variables were significant.

The results of the stepwise regression analyses are presented in Table 14. For RP, 11% of the variance in their perceptions of children's anxiety/depression was accounted for by the child's age (positive relationship) and sex (higher levels for girls than for boys). However, none of the three coparental variables was a significant predictor. Therefore, for RP, the hypothesis of no direct relationship between coparental conflict and CSEWB was supported for all four dependent variables. However, the posited relationships between CSEWB and both coparental competition and cooperation were not supported for any of the dependent variables.

However, quite different results were found for NRP's perceptions. All four CSEWB variables were predicted by at least one QFSR variable. Children's dependency was related negatively to the child's age and positively to coparental competition. The model accounted for 17% of

Table 13. Univariate Tests from Multivariate Regression Analysis of Effects of Quality of Coparental Relationship and Background Variables on Children's Social-Emotional Well-Being

	Residential Parents				Nonresidential Parents			
	Dependency	Anxiety/ Depression	Aggression	Productivity	Dependency	Anxiety/ Depression	Aggression	Productivity
F^a	1.45	2.46*	.59	1.40	2.22*	2.82*	2.03*	2.18*
R	.32	.40	.21	.31	.51	.55	.49	.50
R^2	.10	.16	.04	.10	.26	.30	.24	.25
Adj. R^2	.03	.10	.00	.03	.14	.20	.12	.14

[a] df = 9,119 for residential parents; 9,58 for nonresidential parents.

*$p < .05$.

Table 14. Stepwise Regression Analysis of Effects of Quality of Coparental Relationship and Background Variables on Children's Social-Emotional Well-Being

	R	R^2	B	t	F
Residential					
Anxiety/depression					
Child's age	.24	.06	.24	2.79	
Child's sex	.33	.11	-.22	-2.59	7.26[a]
Nonresidential					
Dependency					
Child's age	.32	.10	-.33	-2.88	
Competition	.41	.17	.26	2.28	6.65[b]
Anxiety/depression					
Competition	.42	.18	.50	4.33	
Conflict	.48	.23	-.24	-2.09	9.62[b]
Aggression					
Competition	.40	.16	.40	3.51	12.31[c]
Productivity					
Cooperation	.39	.15	.39	3.43	11.78[c]

Note. n = 125 for residential parents; n = 68 for nonresidential parents. R and R^2 are reported for each step. Standardized beta coefficients, ts, and Fs are reported for final step only. Probability criteria of $p < .05$ to enter and $p < .10$ to remove variables were used. All reported ts and Fs are significant at $p < .05$.

[a]df = 2,122. [b]df = 2,65. [c]df = 1,66.

the variance in dependency with competition adding 7% to the 10% contributed by the child's age alone. Children's anxiety/depression was related positively to coparental competition and negatively to coparental conflict. These two variables accounted for 23% of the variance in anxiety/depression with conflict adding 5% to the 18% contributed by competition alone. Children's aggression was predicted by coparental competition only. Competition was related positively to aggression and accounted for 16% of the variance. Children's productivity was predicted by coparental cooperation only. Cooperation was related positively to productivity, accounting for 15% of the variance.

Therefore, for NRP, the posited relationships between coparental competition and CSEWB were supported for three of the four dependent variables. Competition was related positively to children's dependency, anxiety/depression, and aggression and was unrelated to children's productivity. The hypothesis that coparental cooperation is related positively to CSEWB was supported for only one of the four dependent variables. Coparental cooperation was related positively to children's productivity, but was unrelated to children's dependency, anxiety/depression, and aggression. Finally, the hypothesis of no direct relationship between coparental conflict and CSEWB was supported for three of the four dependent variables. Coparental conflict was unrelated to children's dependency, aggression, and productivity. However, contrary to the hypothesis, a negative relationship was found between conflict and children's anxiety/depression. This unexpected finding merits special examination.

Although the zero-order correlation between coparental conflict and children's anxiety/depression (r = -.08) was not statistically significant, coparental conflict emerged as a significant predictor of this dimension of CSEWB in the multiple regression analysis. However, the effects of coparental conflict in the regression model controlled for different levels of coparental competition. Eliminating the effect of coparental competition produced a statistically significant negative partial correlation between coparental conflict and children's anxiety/depression (partial r = -.23). This indicates that coparental competition acted as a suppressor variable so that the "true" effect of conflict on children's anxiety/depression was masked in the zero-order correlation (Cohen & Cohen, 1975; Lavee, McCubbin, & Olson, 1987; Pedhazur, 1982). That is, the statistically insignificant simple correlation between coparental conflict and children's anxiety/depression apparently was due largely to the positive relationship between children's anxiety/depression and coparental competition and the positive relationship between coparental conflict and competition. Pedhazur has stated that when a suppressor effect exists, a partial correlation (in which the effect of the suppressor variable is controlled) provides a better indicator of the suppressed variable's potential usefulness for explaining the criterion variable than a zero-order correlation. Therefore, for NRP, coparental conflict <u>decreased</u> children's anxiety/depression when competition was held constant.

The second part of hypothesis 2 posited that of the three coparental variables, competition is the most important predictor of CSEWB.

The relative, unique contribution of each independent variable was assessed by comparing the number of dependent variables each predicted in the multiple regression analyses and the magnitude of the partial correlation coefficients when more than one QFSR variable predicted a specific dependent variable. Partial correlations were used because the assessment of the relative strength of variables using Beta coefficients has been criticized previously (Norušis, 1985).

The hypothesis that coparental competition has stronger effects on CSEWB than either conflict or cooperation was supported for NRP, but was not supported for RP. Competition had significant effects on NRP's perceptions of three of the four CSEWB variables, whereas conflict and cooperation predicted only one dependent variable each. Also, for the only dependent variable with more than one significant QFSR predictor--children's anxiety/depression--the effect of competition (partial r = .47) was greater than that of conflict (partial r = -.23).

A summary and interpretation of the results of this study as well as a discussion of the conclusions and implications drawn from its findings follow immediately in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Summary of Findings

This study was based on the premise that coparental conflict (disagreements), competition (triangulation of the children), and cooperation (supportive behaviors) are three separate and distinct dimensions of the quality of the former spouse relationship (QFSR). The results of factor and chi-square analyses and coefficients of determination supported this idea. Also, as expected, correlational procedures indicated a moderate negative relationship between competition and cooperation for both residential (RP) and nonresidential parents (NRP). Conflict and competition shared the predicted positive relationship for NRP, but the correlation was not statistically significant for RP. Contrary to expectations, conflict was not related negatively to cooperation for either group of parents.

The second premise underlying this study was that children's social-emotional well-being (CSEWB) following separation is affected negatively by coparental competition and, to a lesser degree, positively by coparental cooperation, but is not related to coparental conflict. This idea was supported for the NRP in this sample. An increase in coparental competition was related to increases in children's anxiety/depression, aggression, and dependency (i.e., to three of the four examined CSEWB variables), whereas an increase in cooperation was related only to an increase in children's productivity. The

sole effect of increased conflict was a decrease in children's anxiety/depression when competition was held constant. The QFSR was not related to CSEWB for the RP in this sample.

This study would have been strengthened by multi-method assessment of its major variables. Although parents' perceptions are important and based on interactions and observations over a long period of time and in a variety of contexts, the addition of a second rater of CSEWB (e.g., teachers, children) and of the QFSR (e.g., children) would have improved the study. Multiple sources also would have allowed for independent ratings of the predictor and criterion variables in the regression analyses and for an examination of the relationship between the QFSR and CSEWB from the child's perspective. However, the evidence for the reliability and validity of the measures used provide support for the study's validity as an investigation of the relationships among self-reported aspects of the QFSR and parents' perceptions of CSEWB, a question worthy of address in its own right. The results of this study, however, should not be generalized to minority divorcing populations because of their underrepresentation in the sample.

Interpretation and Implications

Why was there a relationship between the QFSR and CSEWB for the NRP in this sample but not the RP? One explanation is that the QFSR is more salient for NRP than for RP because the relationship acts as a structural mediator for the NRP's relationship with his/her children whereas the opposite is not the case. That is, the RP (who usually is both the mother and the sole legal custodian after the final divorce

decree) typically has considerable power over the NRP's access to the children. However, the link between the RP and the children is direct and protected from interference by the NRP. Therefore, variation in the QFSR has few ramifications for the RP's access to the children but has great potential for affecting the NRP's, especially if he/she desires to be an actively involved parent.

Past research has indicated that the frequency of NR fathers' visitation and the level of their involvement with the children are related directly to their perceptions of CSEWB (Fulton, 1979) and to the QFSR (Ahrons, 1981, 1983; Heath & MacKinnon, 1988; Isaacs, 1988; Koch and Lowery, 1984; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Other research has indicated that mothers' perceptions of CSEWB are related directly to factors such as their own psychosocial adjustment and parenting skills and are related indirectly to the QFSR through its influence on these factors (Fulton, 1979; Hetherington et al., 1982; Kurdek, 1987; Nelson, 1981; Shaw & Emery, 1987; Tschann et al., 1989). Therefore, it appears that the QFSR has considerable potential to undermine directly both NRP's relationships with their children and their perceptions of CSEWB; whereas the primary significance of the QFSR for RP lies in its potential to facilitate personal well-being and provide the additional parenting resources that indirectly enhance perceptions of CSEWB.

This line of reasoning also aids interpretation of the differences between NRP and RP in the nature of conflict's relationships with competition and cooperation. NRP's perceptions of the frequency of disagreements over parenting issues were related positively to the frequency of passive-aggressive behaviors and triangulation of the

children, but the expected negative relationship between conflict and cooperation was not statistically significant. For RP, the correlations between conflict and both competition and cooperation were positive and of comparable weak magnitudes. There is empirical support for the idea that these differences are not merely a matter of perception, but rooted in actual experience. Past research has indicated that residential mothers engage in more competitive behaviors, that their hostile behaviors are more intense, and that they persist in their anger and hostility longer than nonresidential fathers (Hetherington et al., 1982; Neugebauer, 1988/1989; Sandler et al., in press; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Therefore, it appears that when disagreements arise between former spouses, nonresidential fathers are more often the targets of hostility and competitive tactics than residential mothers.

The different results for the RP and NRP in this study have important implications for research. First, they point clearly to the importance of including the perceptions of NRP and of controlling by residential or custodial status of the respondent when examining the impact of the QFSR on CSEWB. Most past studies have not; rather, they either have included only residential mothers in the sample (Hansen, 1982/83; Heath & MacKinnon, 1988; Hodges et al., 1983; Jacobson, 1978b; Kanoy et al., 1984; Kurdek, 1987; Kurdek & Berg, 1983; Kurdek & Blisk, 1983; McCombs et al., 1987; Nelson, 1981; Shaw & Emery, 1987; Shybunko, 1988/89; Stolberg & Bush, 1985; Stolberg et al., 1987; Tschann et al., 1989) or have combined RP and NRP for data analysis (Luepnitz, 1986; Saayman & Saayman, 1989; Guidubaldi et al., 1986;

Johnston et al., 1987). Also, the causal pathways between the QFSR and CSEWB need further exploration because past research has indicated that the QFSR has direct, indirect, and contingent effects on CSEWB and that the pathways may differ for RP and NRP. That is, although there was no direct relationship between the QFSR and CSEWB for the RP in this sample, path analysis might locate important indirect effects of the QFSR on the RP's perceptions of CSEWB via its effects on the RP's own psychosocial well-being and parenting skills.

The different results found for the NRP and RP in this study also point to the importance of including both parents' perceptions of the QFSR and CSEWB in clinical and court-related assessments of divorcing families. The prudence of this practice is further implicated by the finding of the current and past studies (Ahrons, 1979, 1980b; Goldsmith, 1980) that parents tend to minimize their own competition and their former spouse's cooperation and to maximize their own cooperation and their former spouse's competition. In fact, when assessment of the QFSR is needed for making crucial court-ordered custody and visitation decisions, it probably would be most prudent to include children's and third-party (e.g., character witnesses, therapists) perceptions of the parents' conflict-related behaviors.

Why did coparental conflict <u>decrease</u> NRP's perceptions of children's anxiety/depression? The direction of this relationship was opposite of that expected from intuitive, atheoretical, and even family systems perspectives of divorce. One explanation is that coparental conflict indicates continued involvement of the NRP. Neugebauer (1988/1989) concluded from his interview research that

(a) the central meaning of divorce for the children in his sample was that they no longer lived with one of their parents, and (b) the potential or actual loss of relationship with the NRP was a primary source of children's stress, anxiety, and depression. From a conflict theory perspective, conflict is necessary for family redefinition and a successful transition from nuclearity to binuclearity. As long as parents are engaged in the "fair fighting" that leads to meaningful change, both likely will continue to be involved with the children. From this viewpoint, the danger lies in the absence of conflict, for this probably means that one parent has withdrawn from or been "closed out" of the family. Therefore, continuing conflict combined with controlled competition decreases children's anxiety/depression because conflict likely acts as a surrogate variable for NRP involvement.

A second explanation for the unexpected negative relationship between coparental conflict and children's anxiety/depression involves the measure of conflict used in the study. Because the scale did not distinguish between arguments in front of the children and encapsulated conflict (i.e., private disagreements) it could be that children were not privy to much of the conflict reported by the parents in this study. Past studies have found that arguments witnessed by children are more detrimental to CSEWB than encapsulated conflict (Hetherington et al., 1979; Jacobson, 1978b). Therefore, had coparental conflict been rated by children themselves, only that portion of conflict perceived by children would have been included, and the beneficial effects of coparental conflict might not have been found. Attention now turns to a discussion of the expected results.

The empirical support gathered for both the multidimensional conceptualization of the QFSR and the theoretical model of its impact on CSEWB proferred in this paper points to the efficacy of using family conflict theory to conceptualize and operationalize the QFSR. Scholars have been grappling with the phenomenon of "the quality of relationship between divorcing spouses" and its effects on divorce adjustment for over a decade; and it is clear from the literature that "conflict" has been the concept, or at least the term, used most often in those efforts. However, family systems and stress theories have been the conceptual frameworks underpinning most of the research in the area. Although these perspectives certainly are important for understanding the processes of divorce, family reorganization, and divorce adjustment, they lack the conceptual tools required to understand the role of conflict and conflict behaviors in those processes. Therefore, conceptualization of the QFSR and conflict have remained nebulous, unclear, and inconsistent. Further progress in this area seems dependent on the widespread adoption of a framework that provides the requisite tools for clearly conceptualizing the central constructs. The notion that family conflict theory is uniquely suited for this task both stimulated the author to conduct this study and gained support from the results.

The most important implications of applying conflict theory to the divorce process are that (a) the QFSR should be viewed as a complex phenomenon composed of several aspects and (b) the different aspects should be distinquished in theory, research, and treatment because of their differential effects on family redefinition and the well-being

of family members. This idea is in direct contrast to the popular notion that the QFSR is a unidimensional phenomenon that varies along a single bipolar continuum with high conflict/competition (i.e., "poor relationships") at one extreme and low conflict/high cooperation (i.e., "good relationships") at the other. The results of this study indicated not only that coparental conflict, competition, and cooperation are distinct aspects of the QFSR, but that the frequency of disagreement between parents over childrearing issues has little consistent relationship to the way they address the conflict. It appears that parents can either cooperate, compete, or combine both (although cooperation tends to increase as competition decreases) regardless of the level of conflict. Therefore, high conflict does not preclude a "good relationship" between coparents. This supports the premise that it is conflict behavior, not conflict itself, that determines the overall tone of the QFSR.

The importance of these distinctions was further underscored by the effects of the QFSR on CSEWB expected and found in this study. When significant, the coparental relationship variables accounted for between 7% and 23% of the variance in CSEWB. Thus, although children's divorce adjustment obviously is influenced by additional factors, it is clear from both the current and past research that the QFSR should be included in the list of important predictors. More importantly, this study provided new information about the relative, differential, and unique contribution of coparental conflict, competition, and cooperation on CSEWB.

Contrary to predominant beliefs and the findings of Kurdek and Berg (1983), coparental conflict did not adversely effect parents' perceptions of their children's well-being in this study. Therefore, this study and those of Kurdek (1987) and McCombs et al. (1987) combine to provide considerable support for the idea that coparental conflict is not the critical dimension of coparents' relationship for children's adjustment early in the divorce transition.

Also contrary to popular beliefs, coparental cooperation during this early phase of divorce did not substantially enhance CSEWB. Consistent with McCombs et al.'s (1987) finding that coparental cooperation emerged as a significant predictor of GPA but not of four other dimensions of CSEWB, cooperation predicted only children's productivity in this study. It appears that acting as resources and supporting each other's parenting endeavors enhance prosocial-externalized aspects of CSEWB, but do not reduce children's antisocial behaviors or anxiety/depression. Hansen (1982/83) found that cooperative behaviors between divorced parents were associated with supportive parenting behaviors. Therefore, mutually supportive coparents apparently are likely to provide the parental support and encouragement that enhance children's productivity and school achievement. However, failure to achieve a highly cooperative coparenting relationship does not appear to damage other aspects of CSEWB.

In contrast to the limited impact of coparental conflict and cooperation, coparental competition had detrimental effects on several dimensions of CSEWB. Consistent with the findings of other scholars (Hetherington et al., 1982; Jacobson, 1978b; Kurdek, 1987; Sandler et

al., in press; Tschann et al., 1987), triangulation of the children in coparental conflicts during early separation adversely affected both internalized and externalized aspects of CSEWB. Therefore, the most crucial aspect of the QFSR for CSEWB appears to be competition.

These findings have important implications for intervention with divorcing families. Sandler et al. (in press) stated that with sufficient theoretical and empirical bases, the amount of intervention attention devoted to a specific divorce-related problem can be proportionate to both its frequency of occurrence in the population and its importance for well-being. This statement strikes at the heart of the issues of effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability in intervention programming. Because establishing an effective coparental relationship is both a prevalent problemmatic issue for divorcing parents and an important determinant of children's divorce adjustment, the QFSR merits a fair share of intervention attention.

More specifically, the results of this and previous studies implicate that educational and clinical intervention with divorcing parents during early separation should focus directly on decreasing competition rather than decreasing conflict or increasing cooperation. This specificity is particularly relevant since the descriptive literature has indicated that high conflict and low cooperation are normal during the early months of separation (Ahrons & Rodgers, 1987; Bloom & Hodges, 1981; Spanier & Thompson, 1984). It seems that trying to get recently separated parents to avoid disagreements and to act supportively towards one another when they are struggling with the intense emotional and psychic aspects of divorce "goes against the grain" of

normal behavior. Furthermore, expectations for "friendly" interaction with high levels of flexibility and support appear to be not only unrealistic, but unwarranted in light of the growing evidence that low conflict does not enhance CSEWB and that the benefits of high cooperation are minimal. In fact, therapuetic efforts to reduce conflict and increase cooperation may actually cause harm if they induce guilt in parents unable to achieve the goals, interfere with the family redefinition process, or alienate NRP and resultingly increase children's anxiety/depression.

In sum, intervention with recently separated parents should focus on (a) allowing conflict to emerge so that family redefinition can proceed, (b) teaching fair-fighting skills and constructive conflict management techniques, and (c) helping parents to compartmentalize spousal and parental conflicts, encapsulate their conflicts, and avoid specific competitive behaviors such as denigration and the use of their children as messengers, spies, allies, or hostages. Because coparental competition and cooperation are related negatively, a serendipitous result of this approach might be that cooperation also is increased. By focusing initially on competition, (a) children's anxiety/depression, dependency, and aggression might be reduced, (b) coparental cooperation might be increased, and eventually, (c) children's productivity might be improved, all without placing unrealistic initial demands on recently separated spouses to be supportive of one another.

In regards to the implications of this study for intervention with children of divorce, programs should include a component focused on

helping children to identify, protest, and avoid being placed in the middle of their parents' conflicts. Assertiveness training techniques that teach children how to confront their parents constructively when they are being triangulated would help children to disengage from coparental conflict without disengaging from their parents. This approach also should help children gain some sense of personal mastery and control in a situation that they themselves neither created nor, most likely, chose or desire.

An important implication for research on the impact of the QFSR on children drawn from the results of this study is that CSEWB should be conceptualized and operationalized as a multidimensional construct. The four dimensions of CSEWB examined in this study were effected differently by coparental conflict, competition, and cooperation. Also, coparental competition was related to internalized as well as externalized antisocial dimensions of CSEWB. In fact, the strongest effects were found for children's anxiety/depression. Therefore, research should include both internalized and externalized and both antisocial and prosocial aspects of children's well-being.

Several important questions need to be addressed in future research. What are the contingent effects of (a) the child's age, (b) the child's sex, (c) the competitive parents' sex or residential status, (d) whether one or both parents are competitive, and (e) the passage of time on the relationships among dimensions of the QFSR and dimensions of CSEWB? Also, are the relationships among the QFSR and CSEWB different for parents' and children's perceptions. And finally, are the effects of direct coparental competition (i.e., yelling,

verbal abuse, and physical violence) different from those of the indirect competition focused on in this study?

Conclusion

The prevailing body of literature has indicated that children of divorce are vulnerable to social-emotional problems. However, it also has indicated that a "high quality" relationship between parents appears to reduce this vulnerability. Using family conflict theory integrated with family systems theory as a conceptual basis, the review of relevant research and data from the current study have indicated that the most important ingredient of a "high quality" coparental relationship appears to be a low level of competition. The major implications of this study are that (a) family conflict theory offers valuable and empirically sound concepts for understanding the complexity of both the QFSR and its impact on CSEWB, (b) models of the impact of divorce on children should reflect the differential effects of coparental conflict, competition, and cooperation consistently found in the research, (c) research on the impact of the QFSR on CSEWB should use multidimensional measures of both variables, and (d) intervention with divorcing families should include a component focused on helping coparents avoid competitive behaviors and helping children avoid being placed in the middle of coparental conflicts. In sum, the results of this study support the underlying notion that, if divorcing spouses avoid competition, conflict can serve its highest purpose of catalyzing meaningful change and facilitating divorce adjustment whether or not parents ever achieve friendly cooperation.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

RESEARCH ON FACTORS RELATED TO CSEWB POST-SEPARATION AND JUSTIFICATION FOR CONTROL VARIABLES INCLUDED IN STUDY

Quality of Former Spouse Relationship

Ellison, 1983
Fulton, 1979
Furstenberg & Seltzer, 1986
Guidubaldi, Cleminshaw, Perry, Nastasi, & Lightel, 1986
Heath & MacKinnon, 1988
Hess & Camara, 1979
Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1979, 1982
Hodges, Buchsbaum, & Tierney, 1983
Jacobson, 1978b
Johnston, Gonzàlez, & Campbell, 1987
Kanoy, Cunningham, White, & Adams, 1984
Kurdek, 1987
Kurdek & Berg, 1983
Kurdek & Blisk, 1983
Lowenstein & Koopman, 1978
Luepnitz, 1986
McCombs, Forehand, & Brody, 1987
Nelson, 1981
Rosen, 1977, 1979
Saayman & Saayman, 1988/89
Sandler, Wolchik, & Braver, in press
Shaw & Emery, 1987
Slater & Haber, 1984
Shybunko, 1988/89
Stolberg & Bush, 1985
Stolberg, Camplair, Currier, & Wells, 1987
Tschann, Johnston, Kline, & Wallerstein, 1989
Wallerstein & Kelly 1980
Walsh & Stolberg, 1988/89

Nature and Quality of Parent/Child Relationships

Ahrons, 1983
Felner, Stolberg, & Cowen, 1975
Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985
Heath & MacKinnon, 1988
Hess & Camara, 1979
Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982
Hodges, Buchsbaum, & Tierney, 1983
Isaacs, 1988
Jacobson, 1978a, 1978c
Kanoy, Cunningham, White, & Adams, 1984
Kurdek & Berg, 1983
Loveland-Cherry, 1986

Pett, 1982
Santrock & Warshak, 1979
Stolberg & Bush, 1985
Stolberg, Camplair, Currier, & Wells, 1987
Tschann, Johnston, Kline, & Wallerstein, 1989
Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980
Walsh & Stolberg, 1988/89

Parents' Psychosocial Well-Being

Belsky, Lerner, & Spanier, 1984
Furstenberg & Seltzer, 1986
Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985
Hanson, 1986
Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982
Kanoy, Cunningham, White, & Adams, 1984
Kurdek, 1987
Kurdek & Berg, 1983
Kurdek & Blisk, 1983
Long, 1986
Pett, 1982
Shaw & Emery, 1987
Stolberg & Bush, 1985
Stolberg, Camplair, Currier, & Wells, 1987
Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980

Amount of Environmental Change for Child

Belsky, Lerner, & Spanier, 1984
Farber, Felner, & Primavera, 1985
Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985
Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982
Hodges, Tierney, & Buchsbaum, 1984
Kurdek, 1987
Kurdek & Berg, 1983
Kurdek & Blisk, 1983
Sandler, Wolchik, & Braver, in press
Schlesinger, 1982
Stolberg & Anker, 1983
Stolberg & Bush, 1985
Stolberg, Camplair, Currier, & Wells, 1987
Wolchik, Fogas, & Sandler, 1984

Level of Social Support Available for Child	
Hanson, 1986	Loveland-Cherry, 1986
Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982	Santrock & Warshak, 1979
Kurdek, 1987	Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980

Child's Sex	
Block, Block, & Morrison, 1981	Stolberg & Bush, 1985
Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985	Tschann, Johnston, Kline, & Wallerstein, 1989
Hess & Camara, 1979	Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980
Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982	Whitehead, 1979
Hodges & Bloom, 1984	Zill, 1983
Santrock & Warshak, 1979	

Child's Age	
Desimone-Luis, O'Mahoney, & Hunt, 1979	Neal, 1983
Hodges & Bloom, 1984	Stolberg & Anker, 1984
Kurdek, 1987	Stolberg & Bush, 1985
Kurdek & Berg, 1983	Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980
Kurdek, Blisk, & Siesky, 1981	Zill, 1983

Length of Time Since Separation	
Bloom & Hodges, 1984	Kurdek, 1987
Heath & Lynch, 1988	Nelson, 1981
Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982	Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980
Kinard & Reinherz, 1984, 1986	

Family's Socioeconomic Status	
Bane, 1976	Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985
Bloom, Asher, & White, 1978	Hanson, 1986
Colletta, 1979	Tschann, Johnston, Kline, & Wallerstein, 1989
Desimone-Luis, O'Mahoney, & Hunt, 1979	Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980
Espenshade, 1979	

Several individual and situational factors consistently explain variance in children's divorce adjustment and should be included as control variables in investigations of the impact of familial and environmental factors on CSEWB. First, it appears that the negative effects of divorce are more severe and longer-lasting for boys than for girls (Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985; Hess & Camara, 1979; Hetherington et al., 1982; Kurdek, 1987; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Zill, 1983). The primary explanations for this are that boys typically lose their daily relationship with their parental sex-role model whereas girls do not, and boys receive less consistent discipline than girls (Demo & Acock, 1988; Hetherington et al., 1982; Santrock & Warshak, 1979).

There also are sex differences in the qualitative nature of children's responses to stress. Boys are more prone to AE symptoms and girls to AI (Block et al., 1981; Emery, 1982; Emery et al., 1984; Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985; Hess & Camara, 1979; Hodges & Bloom, 1984; Rutter, 1970; Weiss, 1975; Whitehead, 1979; Zill, 1983). Because they are more prone to AI symptoms, the negative effects of divorce on girls may be underestimated (Emery, 1982; Emery et al., 1984). Also, the increases in maturity, responsibility, and school performance commonly observed in girls from divorced homes may not have uniformly positive effects (Block et al., 1981; Demo & Acock, 1988; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Weiss, 1979). This increase in PE traits may be exaggerated prosocial "parental" behavior, a response that masks girls' underlying anger and axiety at the time of divorce but is manifest later in delayed symptoms such as precocious sexual relationships during adolescence (Emery, 1982; Emery et al., 1984; Hetherington,

1972). It is feasible that the impact of divorce on girls and boys may be more nearly equal than the research indicates, but girls' problems escape notice because their sex-role appropriate responses (i.e., anxiety, withdrawal, and exaggerated prosocial behavior) are more subtle and difficult to measure and less bothersome for adults (Emery et al., 1984). The appropriate question, therefore, is not whether both boys and girls respond to divorce, but how and to what degree they respond (Emery, 1982).

Most scholars report more severe and persistent adjustment problems for children who are younger at the time of parental separation than for late latency-aged youth and adolescents (Desimone-Luis, O'Mahoney, & Hunt, 1979; Hodges & Bloom, 1984; Kurdek, 1987; Kurdek & Berg, 1983; Kurdek et al., 1981; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Zill, 1983). The greater cognitive and social resources of older children apparently help them accommodate parental divorce more readily than younger children (Kurdek, 1987).

Qualitative differences in the symptoms of distress manifested by children in various developmental stages also have been identified (Fulton, 1979; Hetherington, 1979; Hodges & Bloom, 1984; Longfellow, 1979; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). Preschoolers appear prone to the AE symptoms of regression, aggression, dependency, and irritability and to temporary disruptions in social skills, peer relations, and normal play activities. Early latency children are the most prone to the AI symptoms of intense anxiety, sadness, grieving, withdrawal, depression, nightmares, and somatic symptoms. They appear to have the most difficulty reestablishing social relationships and customary activity.

Late latency children display intense parent-directed anger and acting-out, but resume vigorous activity quickly. It appears that adolescents are about equally split between those who become preoccupied with the divorce and enmeshed in parental conflict and those who place distance between themselves and their parents' troubles by maintaining normal activities. Problems typically are manifest in the AE symptoms of aggression, predelinquent conduct disorders, sexual precocity, or delinquency, in exaggerated "parental behavior", or somatic symptoms.

Longitudinal studies have shown that children's reactions to divorce also change over the dimension of time both qualitatively and quantitatively. AE symptoms appear to be more prevalent during early separation whereas AI symptoms predominate later (Hodges & Bloom, 1984; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). The overall severity of negative effects, however, appear to diminish over time (Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985; Hetherington et al., 1982; Kurdek et al., 1981; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Warren, Ilgen, Grew, Konanc, & Amara, 1985). Almost all children respond to divorce with emotional upheaval and behavioral disturbances during the first "crisis" year following separation, but most regain their developmental stride by the end of the second year (Hetherington et al., 1982; Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980). About 25% of Wallerstein & Kelly's sample demonstrated consolidated problems 5 years following separation. Scholars also have found no differences between the SEWB of children who had experienced divorce several years earlier and children from intact families (Kinard & Reinherz, 1984,

1986; Levin, 1988/89) or of adults who experienced divorce during childhood and those who did not (Rubin, 1979).

However, some scholars have found no effects for the length of time since separation on CSEWB (Hodges & Bloom, 1984; Hodges et al., 1984; Kalter & Rembar, 1981; Santrock, 1975). There is evidence that the mere passage of time does not predict CSEWB; rather, the severity and persistence of problems are mediated by time combined with a number of family process and situational factors such that CSEWB may or may not improve over time (Heath & Lynch, 1988).

Finally, the family's socioeconomic status (SES) mediates the effects of divorce on children. The typical significant decline in financial status from pre- to post-divorce for custodial mothers and their children is well-documented in the literature, as are the negative effects of this decline on CSEWB (Bane, 1976; Bloom, Asher, & White, 1978; Colletta, 1979; Desimone-Luis, et al., 1979; Espenshade, 1979; Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985; Hanson, 1986; Tschann et al., 1989).

In sum, there is sufficient empirical justification for including the child's sex and age, the length of time since separation, and the family's SES as control variables in all studies of the impact of divorce on children. Failure to do so contributes to the inconsistent and contradictory findings that limit our understanding.

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH COMPARING CHILDREN FROM INTACT AND DIVORCED HOMES ON DIMENSIONS OF CSEWB

Antisocial-Externalized Dimensions

Delinquincy & Predelinquent Conduct Disorders
Dornbusch, Carlsmith, Bushwall, Ritter, Leiderman, Hastorf, & Gross, 1985
Kalter, Riemer, Brickman, & Chen, 1985
Peterson & Zill, 1986
Rickel & Langner, 1985

Aggression & Noncompliance
Felner, Ginter, Boike, & Cowen, 1981
Hammond, 1979
Hess & Camara, 1979
Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982
Hodges, Buchsbaum, & Tierney, 1983

Sexual Precocity
Booth, Brinkerhoff, & White, 1984
Hetherington, 1972
Hogan & Kitagawa, 1985
Newcomer & Udry, 1987

Hyperactivity, Impulsivity, & Distractibility
Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985
Hammond, 1979
Peterson & Zill, 1986
Young & Parish, 1977

Dependency
Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982
Hodges, Buchsbaum, & Tierney, 1983

Prosocial-Externalized Dimensions

Social Skills
Felner, Ginter, Boike, & Cowen, 1981
Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982
Stolberg & Anker, 1983
Stolberg, Camplair, Currier, & Wells, 1987

Peer Relations
Santrock, 1975
Wyman, Cowen, Hightower, & Pedro-Carroll, 1985

Productivity
Hess & Camara, 1979
Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982
Hodges, Buchsbaum, & Tierney, 1983

Antisocial-Internalized Dimensions

Anxiety
Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982

Insecurity
Young & Parrish, 1977

Withdrawal
Peterson & Zill, 1986

Stress
Hess & Camara, 1979

Sadness
Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985
Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1982

Prosocial-Internalized Dimensions

Internal Locus of Control
Guidubaldi & Perry, 1985
Kalter, Alpern, Spence, & Plunkett, 1984

Ego-Identity Achievement
Crossman, Shea, & Adams, 1980

Self-Concept/Self-Esteem
Johnson & Hutchinson, 1988/89
Kalter, Riemer, Brickman, & Chen, 1985
Kinard & Reinherz, 1984, 1986
Parish & Dostal, 1980
Parish & Taylor, 1979
Parish & Wigle, 1985
Wyman, Cowen, Hightower, & Pedro-Carroll, 1985
Young & Parish, 1977

APPENDIX C

COVER LETTERS AND QUESTIONNAIRE

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

, 1986

College of
Human Ecology

Department of
Child and
Family Studies

!title! !first! !last!
!address!

Dear !title! !last!,

You are invited to participate in the Orientation for Divorcing Parents (ODP) Research Project. This project is being supported by the Child and Family Studies department at the University of Tennessee as part of the ODP program. The goals of the project are to learn about factors that influence children's well-being when their parents' divorce, and to gather information about the helpfulness of the ODP program. I realize this may be a period of change for you and sincerely hope not to intrude. But your cooperation is really needed to understand the changes parents and their children experience during the divorce process. Your participation will help counselors, educators, and judges become more aware of divorcing parents' concerns.

The survey for the project is included with this letter. Please fill it out and bring it with you to the first night of the workshop. It will take about an hour to complete. If you have decided not to attend the workshop, I would really appreciate it if you would still fill out the survey and return it in the enclosed envelope.

Your responses to the survey will be strictly confidential. The only persons who will have access to individual responses will be myself and my research assistants. This means that no one from the Fourth Circuit Court or from Child and Family Services will have access to your individual responses.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of your participation. The information you share will help educators plan better programs, and will help others deal with their personal experiences as they divorce.

If you have any questions about The Orientation for Divorcing Parents Research Project, or need help reading or taking the survey, Please call me at 974-5316 (Child and Family Studies).

Thank you for completing the survey.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Buehler, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Child and Family Studies

CB/jle

1215 West Cumberland Avenue, Room 115/Knoxville, Tennessee, 37996-1900/(615) 974-5316

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

, 1986

College of
Human Ecology

Department of
Child and
Family Studies

!title! !first! !last!
!address!

Dear !title! !last!,

You are invited to participate in the Children and Divorce Research Project. This project is being supported by the Department of Child and Family Studies at the University of Tennessee. You may remember that awhile ago you received some information from Judge Swann of the Fourth Circuit Court about a program called the Orientation for Divorcing Parents (ODP). Well, one of the purposes of this research project is to identify the effects of that program on people's experiences following the divorce. In order to do this effectively, I need to have some divorcing parents participate in the research project who did not attend the ODP program.

The second purpose of this project, one which is very important, is to identify factors that influence children's and parents' well-being during and following a divorce. Your participation is needed to understand the changes parents and their children experience during the divorce process.

Let me outline what I would ask you to do if you choose to participate in this project. At this point, I would ask you to complete the survey that is enclosed with this letter. It will take about an hour. If you feel some questions do not apply to your situation please write NA by the question or write me a note. Then, in about 10 weeks I will send a second survey for you to complete. It will be very similar to the one that is enclosed. There are no right or wrong answers, so please be as honest and straightforward as possible. I guarantee that your responses to the survey will be strictly confidential. Please mail the completed survey by September 1.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of your participation. It will help counselors, teachers, and judges become more aware of divorcing parents' concerns. If you have any questions about the Children and Divorce Research Project, or need help reading or taking the survey, please call me at 974-5316 (Child and Family Studies).

Thank you for your participation and support.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Buehler, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor

1215 West Cumberland Avenue, Room 115/Knoxville, Tennessee, 37996-1900/(615) 974-5316

DIVORCING PARENTS' SURVEY

Cheryl Buehler, Ph.D.

Child and Family Studies

University of Tennessee

Suppose we say that the top of this ladder (10) represents the best possible life for you and the bottom (1) represents the worst possible life for you. Where on the ladder do you personally see yourself at the present time?

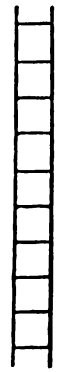
_____ enter step number

Where on the ladder would you say you were about 3 years ago?

_____ enter step number

Where on the ladder do you think you really might be in 3 years?

_____ enter step number



How often in the past week did you feel each of the following?

	never	once	several times	often
Particularly excited or interested in something.	1	2	3	4
So restless you couldn't sit long in a chair.	1	2	3	4
Very angry at somebody or something.	1	2	3	4
That things were going your way.	1	2	3	4
Upset because someone criticized you.	1	2	3	4
On top of the world.	1	2	3	4
Very lonely, not close to other people.	1	2	3	4
Pleased about having accomplished something.	1	2	3	4
Bored.	1	2	3	4
Down and discouraged because nothing seemed to be going right for you.	1	2	3	4
Proud because someone complimented you on something you had done.	1	2	3	4

Here is a list of common conditions that people experience. Please indicate whether you have experienced this condition within the past month by circling the corresponding number.

(1) sleeplessness
(2) nervousness
(3) being tired
(4) headaches
(5) indigestion
(6) allergies
(7) colds, flu, or fever
(8) irregularity
(9) moody spells
(10) trouble with periods (women)

For each statement, please circle the choice that best describes how you feel.

	strongly agree	agree somewhat	disagree somewhat	strongly disagree
I feel I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.	1	2	3	4
I feel I have a number of good qualities.	1	2	3	4
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	1	2	3	4
I am able to do things as well as most other people.	1	2	3	4
I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	1	2	3	4
I take a positive attitude toward myself.	1	2	3	4
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	1	2	3	4
I wish I could have more respect for myself.	1	2	3	4
I certainly feel useless at times.	1	2	3	4
At times I think I am no good at all.	1	2	3	4

Please circle the choice which best describes how satisfied you are with your day-to-day life?

	extremely satisfied	somewhat satisfied	not satisfied
The work you do	1	2	3
Where you live	1	2	3
Your way of life	1	2	3
The things you do for enjoyment	1	2	3
Your health	1	2	3

The following is a list of events or situations you may have experienced since your separation. Please read each item carefully. If you have NOT experienced the item, circle the "0" and go on to the next item. If you have experienced the item, circle the number that represents how disruptive it has been in your life (how much it has changed your life).

0 = did NOT experience
1 = experienced this - it was not disruptive
2 = experienced this - it was somewhat disruptive
3 = experienced this - it was moderately disruptive
4 = experienced this - it was quite disruptive
5 = experienced this - it was extremely disruptive

Meeting household expenses has been more difficult.	0	1	2	3	4	5
The children have changed schools.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I started working outside the home.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have had less time to spend with my children.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Sharing parenting responsibilities with my husband/wife been more difficult.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I don't have as many good times with friends as I used to.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have felt intense emotional pain.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have felt more of a sense of personal failure.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have more problems sleeping.	0	1	2	3	4	5
We are contesting the divorce.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Contact with my lawyer has been more difficult.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have moved.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have been concerned about who will get what.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Household routines and daily patterns have changed.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have had problems finding a job.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have changed jobs.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Relationships with my children have gotten worse.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Talking with my husband/wife about money matters has been more difficult.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Relationships with my parents have gotten worse.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have lost friends.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have been more depressed.	0	1	2	3	4	5
I have felt as though I don't control my own life.	0	1	2	3	4	5
My use of alcohol or drugs has increased.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Getting household tasks done has been more difficult.	0	1	2	3	4	5
A child has been to juvenile court.	0	1	2	3	4	5
My relationship with my husband/ wife has gotten worse.	0	1	2	3	4	5

Please identify the child you think has been doing the best since the separation. For this questionnaire, this child will be referred to as Child A. If you have only 1 child, please refer to him/her as Child A.

Your relationship to child (circle one):

(1) mother
(2) father
(3) stepmother
(4) stepfather
(5) other _____

Sex of child:

(1) male (2) female

Age of child: _____ years old

Please describe this child's behavior as you have observed it during the past month by circling the number that corresponds with the best response.

DURING LAST MONTH, has s/he...	never	rarely	sometimes	often
Spent time with friends?	1	2	3	4
Wanted help in things s/he could have done on own?	1	2	3	4
Became discouraged when attempted something on own?	1	2	3	4
Flared up if couldn't have own way?	1	2	3	4
Not responded to discipline?	1	2	3	4
Worked hard at school work?	1	2	3	4
Completed work without being checked upon?	1	2	3	4
Complained about problems?	1	2	3	4

	never	rarely	some-times	often
Seemed sad?	1	2	3	4
Daydreamed?	1	2	3	4
Shown little interest in things, had to be pushed into activity?	1	2	3	4
Tried to get along with others?	1	2	3	4
Laughed and smiled easily?	1	2	3	4
Asked for help when didn't need it?	1	2	3	4
Asked unnecessary questions instead of working on own?	1	2	3	4
Stirred up others into arguments or hitting?	1	2	3	4
Stayed with task or assignment until finished?	1	2	3	4
Done work carefully?	1	2	3	4
Talked about worries?	1	2	3	4
Said people didn't care about him/her?	1	2	3	4
Appeared listless and apathetic?	1	2	3	4
Done things very slowly?	1	2	3	4
Joined others of own accord?	1	2	3	4
Asked for help when could have figured things out?	1	2	3	4
Made cruel or critical remarks to others?	1	2	3	4
Made full use of abilities?	1	2	3	4
Became upset if others did not agree with him/her?	1	2	3	4
Picked quarrels with others?	1	2	3	4
Acted afraid or apprehensive?	1	2	3	4
Sat and stared without doing anything?	1	2	3	4

Now, please identify the child you think has been doing the least well since the separation. For this questionnaire, this child will be referred to as Child 5. If you have only 1 child, skip this section.

Your relationship to child (circle one):

(1) mother (4) stepfather
(2) father (5) other _____
(3) stepmother

Sex of child:

male (2) female

Age of child: _____ years old

Please describe this child's behavior as you have observed it during the past month by circling the number that corresponds with the best response.

DURING LAST MONTH, has s/he...	never	rarely	times	often
Spent time with friends?	1	2	3	4
Wanted help in things s/he could have done on own?	1	2	3	4
Became discouraged when attempting something on own?	1	2	3	4
Flared up if couldn't have own way?	1	2	3	4
Not responded to discipline?	1	2	3	4
Worked hard at school work?	1	2	3	4
Completed work without being checked upon?	1	2	3	4
Complained about problems?	1	2	3	4
Seemed sad?	1	2	3	4
Daydreamed?	1	2	3	4
Shown little interest in things, had to be pushed into activity?	1	2	3	4
Tried to get along with others?	1	2	3	4
Laughed and smiled easily?	1	2	3	4
Asked for help when didn't need it?	1	2	3	4
Asked unnecessary questions instead of working on own?	1	2	3	4

	never	rarely	some-times	often
Stirred up others into arguments or hitting?	1	2	3	4
Stayed with task or assignment until finished?	1	2	3	4
Done work carefully?	1	2	3	4
Talked about worries?	1	2	3	4
Said people didn't care about him/her?	1	2	3	4
Appeared listless and apathetic?	1	2	3	4
Done things very slowly?	1	2	3	4
Joined others of own accord?	1	2	3	4
Asked for help when could have figured things out?	1	2	3	4
Made cruel or critical remarks to others?	1	2	3	4
Made full use of abilities?	1	2	3	4
Became upset if others did not agree with him/her?	1	2	3	4
Picked quarrels with others?	1	2	3	4
Acted afraid or apprehensive?	1	2	3	4
Sat and stared without doing anything?	1	2	3	4

Please circle the appropriate frequency for each statement.

	always	often	some-times	seldom	never
Child A believes divorce is something to be ashamed of.	1	2	3	4	5
Discipline at home was a problem before the separation.	1	2	3	4	5
Disagreements with my husband/ wife about child support.	1	2	3	4	5
I encourage the children to side with me.	1	2	3	4	5
Before the separation, how often did Child A have accidents or injuries (scrapes, cuts) which did not require a visit to the doctor.	1	2	3	4	5
Child A believes that my husband/ wife and I will get back together.	1	2	3	4	5

	always	often	some-times	seldom	never
Disagreements with my husband/ wife about spousal support.	1	2	3	4	5
Before the separation, how often was the atmosphere hostile and angry?	1	2	3	4	5
I feel like a visitor in my children's lives.	1	2	3	4	5
Child B is afraid I may leave him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
Before the separation, how often did you and your husband/wife disagree about how to handle problems about your children?	1	2	3	4	5
I say bad things about my husband's/wife's character.	1	2	3	4	5
Before the separation, how often did Child B have accidents or injuries (scrapes, cuts) which did not require a visit to the doctor.	1	2	3	4	5
Disagreements with my husband/ wife about where the children stay.	1	2	3	4	5
Child A believes that if s/he behaved better we would not have separated.	1	2	3	4	5
Child B believes divorce is something to be ashamed of.	1	2	3	4	5
Discipline at home has been a problem since the separation.	1	2	3	4	5
Child A blames him/herself for the divorce.	1	2	3	4	5
Since the separation, how often has Child A had accidents or injuries (scrapes, cuts) which did not require a visit to the doctor?	1	2	3	4	5
Disagreements with my husband/ wife about seeing the children.	1	2	3	4	5
I use the children to get information about my husband's/ wife's personal life.	1	2	3	4	5
Child A is afraid that I may leave him/her.	1	2	3	4	5

	always	often	some-times	seldom	never
Before the separation, how often was the conversation stressful or tense?	1	2	3	4	5
Child B believes that my husband/wife and I will get back together.	1	2	3	4	5
Disagreements with my husband/wife about the financial settlement.	1	2	3	4	5
Child A blames one of us for the separation.	1	2	3	4	5
My husband/wife provides emotional support in dealing with the children.	1	2	3	4	5
Since the separation, how often has Child B had accidents or injuries (scrapes, cuts) which did not require a visit to the doctor?	1	2	3	4	5
Before the separation, how often did you and your husband/wife physically attack each other?	1	2	3	4	5
I encourage my children to maintain an active involvement with their other parent.	1	2	3	4	5
Child B blames him/herself for the divorce.	1	2	3	4	5
My husband/wife says bad things about my character to the children.	1	2	3	4	5
How often are you a resource to your husband/wife in raising the children?	1	2	3	4	5
Child B believes that if s/he had behaved better we would not have separated.	1	2	3	4	5
Before the separation, how often did you and your husband/wife verbally attack each other?	1	2	3	4	5
How often do you and Child A have a good time together?	1	2	3	4	5

	always	often	some-times	seldom	never
We have regularly scheduled meals.	1	2	3	4	5
When Child B misbehaves, how often do you discipline him/her?	1	2	3	4	5
How often does Child A tell you about his/her day?	1	2	3	4	5
I try to help out if my husband/wife needs to change plans for taking care of the children.	1	2	3	4	5
My husband/wife uses the children to get information about my personal life.	1	2	3	4	5
Child B blames one of us for the separation.	1	2	3	4	5
How often do you and Child B have a good time together?	1	2	3	4	5
I provide my husband/wife emotional support for dealing with the children.	1	2	3	4	5
We have regularly scheduled bedtimes.	1	2	3	4	5
When Child A misbehaves, how often do you discipline him/her?	1	2	3	4	5
My husband/wife tries to help out if I need to change plans for taking care of the children.	1	2	3	4	5
How often does Child B tell you about his/her day?	1	2	3	4	5
How often are your children left unsupervised?	1	2	3	4	5
My husband/wife encourages the children to side with him/her.	1	2	3	4	5
How often is your husband/wife a resource to you in raising the children?	1	2	3	4	5

Please circle any of the following in which you currently need assistance.

(1) Child care
(2) Financial support
(3) Discussing feelings
(4) Social needs
(5) Intimacy/sex
(6) Discussing the separation

How often does the nonresidential parent actually visit the children?

(1) daily
(2) 2-3 times a week
(3) weekly
(4) every 2 weeks
(5) monthly
(6) every few months
(7) never

How often have planned visits occurred as scheduled?

(1) always
(2) often
(3) sometimes
(4) seldom
(5) never

How long are the visitation periods usually?

(1) few minutes
(2) 1-2 hours
(3) half day
(4) whole day
(5) weekend
(6) several days
(7) week or more
(8) there is none

Approximately how much telephone contact does the nonresidential parent have with the children?

(1) daily
(2) 2-3 times a week
(3) weekly
(4) every 2 weeks
(5) monthly
(6) every few months
(7) never

How often do you wish your spouse would see the children?

(1) daily
(2) 2-3 times a week
(3) weekly
(4) every 2 weeks
(5) monthly
(6) every few months
(7) never

How far does the nonresidential parent live from the children?

(1) few doors away
(2) few blocks away
(3) less than 5 miles
(4) several miles away
(5) in a nearby city
(6) in a distant city

Which most closely describes Child A before visitation?

(1) seems to look forward to it
(2) seems neutral
(3) dislikes the idea, but goes
(4) refuses to go at times
(5) there is no visitation

Which most closely describes Child B before visitation?

(1) seems to look forward to it
(2) seems neutral
(3) dislikes the idea, but goes
(4) refuses to go at times
(5) there is no visitation

How flexible is your visitation arrangement?

(1) very flexible
(2) somewhat flexible
(3) mixed
(4) somewhat inflexible
(5) very inflexible

How many times do you have to ask Child A to do something before s/he will do it?

(1) s/he rarely does what I ask
(2) 4-5 times
(3) 2-3 times
(4) once

How many times do you have to ask Child B to do something before s/he will do it?

(1) s/he rarely does what I ask
(2) 4-5 times
(3) 2-3 times
(4) once

In the last month, how many days of school has Child A missed due to:

illness _____ days
skipping school _____ days
trips _____ days
other _____ days

In the last month, how many days of school has Child B missed due to:

illness _____ days
skipping school _____ days
trips _____ days
other _____ days

How many visits to the doctor has Child A made since the separation?

_____ visits

How many visits to the doctor has Child B made since the separation?

_____ visits

How often in the past month has Child A complained about not feeling well?

_____ times

How often in the past month has Child B complained about not feeling well?

_____ times

Who supervises Child A while you are at work?

(1) a sitter or neighbor
(2) day care facility
(3) adult relative
(4) no one
(5) I'm not employed

Who supervises Child B while you are at work?

(1) a sitter or neighbor
(2) day care facility
(3) adult relative
(4) no one
(5) I'm not employed

When I am not at home, my children know how I can be reached

(1) all the time
(2) about three quarters of the time
(3) about half the time
(4) about a quarter of the time
(5) hardly ever

Who told the children about the decision to separate?

(1) I did
(2) my spouse
(3) both of us
(4) no one
(5) other _____

How long before the separation were the children told about the decision to separate?

(1) a month or longer
(2) several weeks
(3) one week
(4) several days
(5) one day
(6) after we separated
(7) haven't been told

What were the children told about responsibility for the divorce?

(1) nothing
(2) my husband/wife and I were equally responsible
(3) I was responsible
(4) my husband/wife was responsible
(5) another person was responsible
(6) other _____

What was Child A's initial reaction to the news?

(1) no visible reaction
(2) crying
(3) anger
(4) happiness
(5) surprise
(6) relief
(7) other _____

What was Child B's initial reaction to the news?

(1) no visible reaction
(2) crying
(3) anger
(4) happiness
(5) surprise
(6) relief
(7) other _____

What were the children told about your plans for divorce at the separation?

(1) that the separation was temporary
(2) that you would eventually divorce
(3) that you would divorce soon
(4) nothing was said about the possibility of a divorce
(5) other _____

Upon hearing about the separation Child A

(1) sided with me
(2) sided with my husband/wife
(3) did not take sides
(4) other _____

Upon hearing about the separation Child B

(1) sided with me
(2) sided with my husband/wife
(3) did not take sides
(4) other _____

How frequently have you and Child A talked about his/her feelings concerning the divorce?

(1) never
(2) seldom
(3) sometimes
(4) often
(5) always

Have any of the following topics been discussed with Child A?

That the separation was not because of anything s/he said or did

(1) yes (2) no

That we considered staying together for his/her sake and found that we couldn't

(1) yes (2) no

That I still loved him/her

(1) yes (2) no

That s/he would be able to see the other parent

(1) yes (2) no

That my husband/wife still loved him/her

(1) yes (2) no

That I will still take care of him/her

(1) yes (2) no

How frequently have you and Child B talked about his/her feelings concerning the divorce?

(1) never
(2) seldom
(3) sometimes
(4) often
(5) always

Have any of the following topics been discussed with Child B?

That the separation was not because of anything s/he said or did

(1) yes (2) no

That we considered staying together for his/her sake and found that we couldn't

(1) yes (2) no

That I still loved him/her

(1) yes (2) no

That s/he would be able to see the other parent

(1) yes (2) no

That my husband/wife still loved him/her

(1) yes (2) no

That I will still take care of him/her

(1) yes (2) no

Before the separation, how many 15 minute time blocks of undivided attention did you spend with Child A on an average day?

_____ blocks

Before the separation, how many 15 minute time blocks of undivided attention did you spend with Child B on an average day?

_____ blocks

Since the separation, how many 15 minute time blocks of undivided attention did you spend with Child A on an average day?

_____ blocks

Since the separation, how many 15 minute time blocks of undivided attention did you spend with Child B on an average day?

_____ blocks

In the past week, which of the following have you used at least several times when disciplining Child A? Circle as many as apply.

(1) take away privileges
(2) yell at him/her
(3) send to room
(4) give reasons for punishment
(5) reward him/her
(6) ignore him/her
(7) talk to him/her
(8) use Time Out or similar technique
(9) praise him/her
(10) make threats
(11) spank him/her
(12) other _____

In the past week, which of the following have you used at least several times when disciplining Child B? Circle as many as apply.

(1) take away privileges
(2) yell at him/her
(3) send to room
(4) give reasons for punishment
(5) reward him/her
(6) ignore him/her
(7) talk to him/her
(8) use Time Out or similar technique
(9) praise him/her
(10) make threats
(11) spank him/her
(12) other _____

On a scale from 1 to 10, with a 1 meaning terrible and a 10 meaning great, how well do you think Child A has been doing since the separation?

_____

On a scale from 1 to 10, with a 1 meaning terrible and a 10 meaning great, how well do you think Child B has been doing since the separation?

_____

Are you thinking of contesting any aspects of the divorce that you have NOT discussed with your lawyer yet?

(1) yes (2) no

If yes, what issue would you contest?

_____

For each of the following people, please place a check in each column they meet Child A's needs.

	physical care/ supervision	emotional needs/ being loved	discussing separation	social needs
Yourself				
My husband/wife				
Grandparents				
Relatives				
Child's friends				
Child's siblings				
Child's coaches and clubleaders				
Other children with divorced parents				
My friends				
Neighbors				

For each of the following people, please place a check in each column they meet Child B's needs.

	physical care/ supervision	emotional needs/ being loved	discussing separation	social needs
Yourself				
My husband/wife				
Grandparents				
Relatives				
Child's friends				
Child's siblings				
Child's coaches and clubleaders				
Other children with divorced parents				
My friends				
Neighbors				

Currently, how involved are you with the children in the follcwing areas?

	very much	much	some-what	a little	not at all
Discipline	1	2	3	4	5
Dress and grooming	1	2	3	4	5
Religious or moral training	1	2	3	4	5
Running errands with or for the children	1	2	3	4	5
Celebrating holidays	1	2	3	4	5
Celebrating significant events	1	2	3	4	5
Attending school or church related functions	1	2	3	4	5
Discussing problems	1	2	3	4	5
Going on vacations	1	2	3	4	5
Planning and preparing meals	1	2	3	4	5
Going to the doctor or dentist	1	2	3	4	5

Generally, how involved are you in the following?

	very much	much	some-what	a little	not at all
Major decisions regarding the children's lives	1	2	3	4	5
Daily decisions regarding the children's lives	1	2	3	4	5
Personal problems the children might be having	1	2	3	4	5
The children's school or medical problems	1	2	3	4	5
Planning special events in the children's lives	1	2	3	4	5
Showing interest in the children's accomplishments and progress	1	2	3	4	5
Talking with your husband/wife about problems you are having raising the children	1	2	3	4	5

	always	often	sometimes	seldom	never
Daily decisions regarding the children's lives	1	2	3	4	5
Personal problems the children might be having	1	2	3	4	5
The children's school or medical problems	1	2	3	4	5
Planning special events in the children's lives	1	2	3	4	5
Showing interest in the children's accomplishments and progress	1	2	3	4	5
Problems you each are having raising the children	1	2	3	4	5
How the children are adjusting to the separation	1	2	3	4	5
Your coparenting relationship	1	2	3	4	5
Finances related to the children	1	2	3	4	5

Please circle the number that indicates how much you have used each strategy for dealing with your separation.

	not used	used somewhat	used quite a bit	used a great deal
Just concentrated on what I had to do next--the next step.	0	1	2	3
I tried to analyze the problem in order to understand it better.	0	1	2	3
Turned to work or substitute activity to take my mind off things.	0	1	2	3
I felt that time would make a difference--the only thing to do was to wait.	0	1	2	3
Bargained or compromised to get something positive from the situation.	0	1	2	3
I did something which I didn't think would work, but at least I was doing something.	0	1	2	3
Tried to get the person responsible to change his or her mind.	0	1	2	3
Talked to someone to find out more about the situation.	0	1	2	3
Criticized or lectured myself.	0	1	2	3
Tried not to burn my bridges, but leave things open somewhat.	0	1	2	3
Hoped a miracle would happen.	0	1	2	3
Went along with fate; sometimes I just have bad luck.	0	1	2	3
Went on as if nothing had happened.	0	1	2	3
I tried to keep my feelings to myself.	0	1	2	3
Looked for the silver lining, so to speak; tried to look on the bright side of things.	0	1	2	3
Slept more then usual.	0	1	2	3
I expressed anger to the person(s) who caused the problem.	0	1	2	3
Accepted sympathy and understanding from someone.	0	1	2	3
I told myself things that helped me to feel better.	0	1	2	3
I was inspired to do something creative.	0	1	2	3
Tried to forget the whole thing.	0	1	2	3
I got professional help.	0	1	2	3
Changed or grew as a person in a good way.	0	1	2	3
I waited to see what would happen before doing anything.	0	1	2	3
I apologized or did something to make up.	0	1	2	3
I made a plan of action and followed it.	0	1	2	3
I accepted the next best thing to what I wanted.	0	1	2	3
I let my feelings out somehow.	0	1	2	3
Realized I brought the problem on myself.	0	1	2	3
I came out of the experience better than I went in.	0	1	2	3
Talked to someone who could do something concrete about the problem.	0	1	2	3
Got away from it for a while; tried to rest or take a vacation.	0	1	2	3

	very much	much	some-what	a little	not at all
Talking with your husband/wife about how the children are adjusting to the separation	1	2	3	4	5
Discussing problems you are having with your coparenting relationship	1	2	3	4	5
Discussing finances related to the children	1	2	3	4	5

Currently, how involved is your former spouse with the children in the following areas?

	very much	much	some-what	a little	not at all
Discipline	1	2	3	4	5
Dress and grooming	1	2	3	4	5
Religious or moral training	1	2	3	4	5
Running errands with or for the children	1	2	3	4	5
Celebrating holidays	1	2	3	4	5
Celebrating significant events	1	2	3	4	5
Attending school or church related functions	1	2	3	4	5
Discussing problems	1	2	3	4	5
Going on vacations	1	2	3	4	5
Planning and preparing meals	1	2	3	4	5
Going to the doctor or dentist	1	2	3	4	5

Generally, how involved is your husband/wife in the following?

	very much	much	some-what	a little	not at all
Major decisions regarding the children's lives	1	2	3	4	5
Daily decisions regarding the children's lives	1	2	3	4	5
Personal problems the children might be having	1	2	3	4	5
The children's school or medical problems	1	2	3	4	5
Planning special events in the children's lives	1	2	3	4	5
Showing interest in the children's accomplishments and progress	1	2	3	4	5
Talking with your husband/wife about problems you are having raising the children	1	2	3	4	5
Talking with your husband/wife about how the children are adjusting to the separation	1	2	3	4	5
Discussing problems you are having with your coparenting relationship	1	2	3	4	5
Discussing finances related to the children	1	2	3	4	5

How often do you and your husband/wife disagree or argue about the following areas of child rearing?

	always	often	some-times	seldom	never
Discipline	1	2	3	4	5
Dress and grooming	1	2	3	4	5
Religious or moral training	1	2	3	4	5
Running errands with or for the children	1	2	3	4	5
Celebrating holidays	1	2	3	4	5
Celebrating significant events	1	2	3	4	5
Attending school or church related functions	1	2	3	4	5
Discussing problems	1	2	3	4	5
Going on vacations	1	2	3	4	5
Planning and preparing meals	1	2	3	4	5
Going to the doctor or dentist	1	2	3	4	5
Major decisions regarding the children's lives	1	2	3	4	5

	not used	used somewhat	used quite a bit	used a great deal
Tried to make myself better by eating, drinking, smoking, using drugs or medication, etc.	0	1	2	3
Took a big chance or did something very risky.	0	1	2	3
I tried not to act too hastily or to follow my first hunch.	0	1	2	3
Found new faith.	0	1	2	3
Maintained my pride and kept a stiff upper lip.	0	1	2	3
Rediscovered what is important in life.	0	1	2	3
Changed something so things would turn out all right.	0	1	2	3
Avoided being with people in general.	0	1	2	3
Didn't let it get to me; refused to think too much about it.	0	1	2	3
I asked a relative or friend I respected for advice.	0	1	2	3
Kept others from knowing how bad things were.	0	1	2	3
Made light of the situation; refused to get too serious about it.	0	1	2	3
Talked to someone about how I was feeling.	0	1	2	3
Stood my ground and fought for what I wanted.	0	1	2	3
Took it out on other people.	0	1	2	3
Drew on my past experience; I was in a similar situation before.	0	1	2	3
I knew what has to be done, so I doubled my efforts to make things work.	0	1	2	3
Refused to believe it had happened.	0	1	2	3
I made a promise to myself that things would be different next time.	0	1	2	3
Came up with a couple of different solutions to the problem.	0	1	2	3
Accepted it, since nothing could be done.	0	1	2	3
I tried to keep my feelings from interfering with other things too much.	0	1	2	3
Wished that I could change what had happened or how I felt.	0	1	2	3
I changed something about myself.	0	1	2	3

	not used	used somewhat	used quite a bit	used a great deal
I daydreamed or imagined a better time or place than the one I was in.	0	1	2	3
Wished that the situation would go away or somehow be over with.	0	1	2	3
Had fantasies or wished about how things might turn out.	0	1	2	3
I prayed.	0	1	2	3
I prepared myself for the worst.	0	1	2	3
I went over in my mind what I would say or do.	0	1	2	3
I thought about how a person I admire would handle this situation and used it as a model.	0	1	2	3
I tried to see things from the other person's point of view.	0	1	2	3
I reminded myself how much worse things could be.	0	1	2	3
I jogged or exercised.	0	1	2	3

For each of the following resources, please place a check in each column they contribute to meeting your needs in the area.

	child care	financial support	discussing feelings	social needs	intimacy /sex	discussing separation
Friends						
Clergy						
Lawyer						
Counselor						
Relatives						
Husband/wife						
Children						
Other separated or divorced persons						
Parents						
People on the job						
People in groups or organizations						
Books or articles						
Workshops or classes						

Your sex:

(1) female (2) male

Your race:

(1) White
(2) Black
(3) Other _____

Your age:

_____ years

Your husband's/wife's age:

_____ years

Your highest educational level:

(1) grade school or less
(2) some high school
(3) high school diploma
(4) non-college training
(5) some college
(6) college degree
(7) some graduate work
(8) graduate degree

Your husband's/wife's highest educational level:

(1) grade school or less
(2) some high school
(3) high school diploma
(4) non-college training
(5) some college
(6) college degree
(7) some graduate work
(8) graduate degree

Are you employed?

(1) yes (2) no

About how many hours per week are you employed?

_____ hours

Were you employed before the separation?

(1) yes (2) no

About how many hours a week?

_____ hours

Your occupation:

(1) professional
(2) managerial/owner
(3) clerical/sales
(4) skilled laborer, farmer
(5) unskilled laborer
(6) other _____

Is your husband/wife employed?

(1) yes (2) no

About how many hours per week?

_____ hours

Was s/he employed before the separation?

(1) yes (2) no

About how many hours a week?

_____ hours

Your husband's/wife's occupation:

(1) professional
(2) managerial/owner
(3) clerical/sales
(4) skilled laborer, farmer
(5) unskilled laborer
(6) other _____

Considering all sources of income, what was your monthly household income before the separation (after taxes)?

_____

Considering all sources of income, what is your current household monthly income (after taxes)?

_____

Regardless of your actual income, how do you consider your present economic status?

(1) poor
(2) struggling
(3) doing okay
(4) up and coming
(5) comfortably affluent
(6) other _____

How many times did you separate before you filed for divorce?

_____ times

How many months have you been separated?

_____ months

What is your marital status?

(1) married, living together
(2) married, but separated
(3) divorced

If divorced, how many months?

_____ months

How undecided were you about the separation?

(1) not at all
(2) a little
(3) some
(4) very

How many years were you married?

_____ years

Who filed for the divorce?

(1) husband (2) wife

Who first mentioned the idea of a divorce?

(1) husband (2) wife

Can you identify a "leaver" and a "left?"

(1) yes (2) no

If yes, which were you?

(1) leaver (2) left

How many children do you have?

_____ children

Who do the children live most of the time?

(1) me
(2) my husband/wife
(3) about half and half

Was this your first marriage?

(1) yes (2) no

If no, how many times were you previously married?

_____ times

List all the people living in your household. Include relationship to you, age, and sex.
e.g. son, 17, male

List any children not living with you. Include age and sex of each.

Do you receive money from your husband/wife to support the children?

(1) yes (2) no

If yes, how much per month?

_____

Do you pay money to your husband/wife to support the children?

(1) yes (2) no

If yes, how much per month?

_____

Are you receiving public assistance?

(1) yes (2) no

Are you planning to remarry in the near future?

(1) yes (2) no

Is your husband/wife planning to remarry in the near future?

(1) yes (2) no (3) I don't know

VITA

Belinda Bratcher Trotter was born in Bethesda, Maryland on August 19, 1951 and was the third of five children born to John Vance and Doris Young Bratcher. She attended elementary schools in Adak, Alaska; Richpond, Kentucky; and Chapel Hill, North Carolina and was graduated from University High School in Bowling Green, Kentucky in June 1969. The following September she entered Western Kentucky University. In January 1971 she transferred to the University of Tennessee, Knoxville where she received a Bachelor of Science degree with high honors in Child Development and Family Relationships in June 1975.

From 1973 until 1977 she was employed by Stewart Laboratories, Inc., a commercial analytical chemistry firm, where she served as head of the atomic absorption spectroscopy department for 2 years after her graduation. In 1977 she began work as a protective services social counselor with the Tennessee Department of Human Services where she worked with the families of abused and neglected children for 2 years.

The author returned to the University of Tennessee, Knoxville to begin study toward a Master's degree in Child and Family Studies in September 1979, and was awarded this degree in June 1981. While working on her Master's, she was accepted into the interdisciplinary doctoral program in Human Ecology. She completed the coursework requirements for that program in 1983. From September 1979 through

December 1983 she worked as a graduate teaching assistant for the Department of Child and Family Studies.

In April 1983, the author and Neal Edmundson Trotter, her husband of 17 years now, had their first child, Jessica Lynn. Their second child, Tamara Nicole, was born in June 1985. After a leave of absence from graduate studies, the author returned to the University of Tennessee in April 1986 to conduct her doctoral research. She received the Doctor of Philosophy degree with a major in Human Ecology in December, 1989.

The author is a member of Phi Kappa Phi, Omicron Nu, the National Council on Family Relations, and the Southeastern Council on Family Relations. She also was a recipient of the Fred M. Roddy scholastic merit scholarship and the University of Tennessee Women of Achievement award. She currently is an instructor for the University of Tennessee Evening School.